

AMONG - THE MEADOWS



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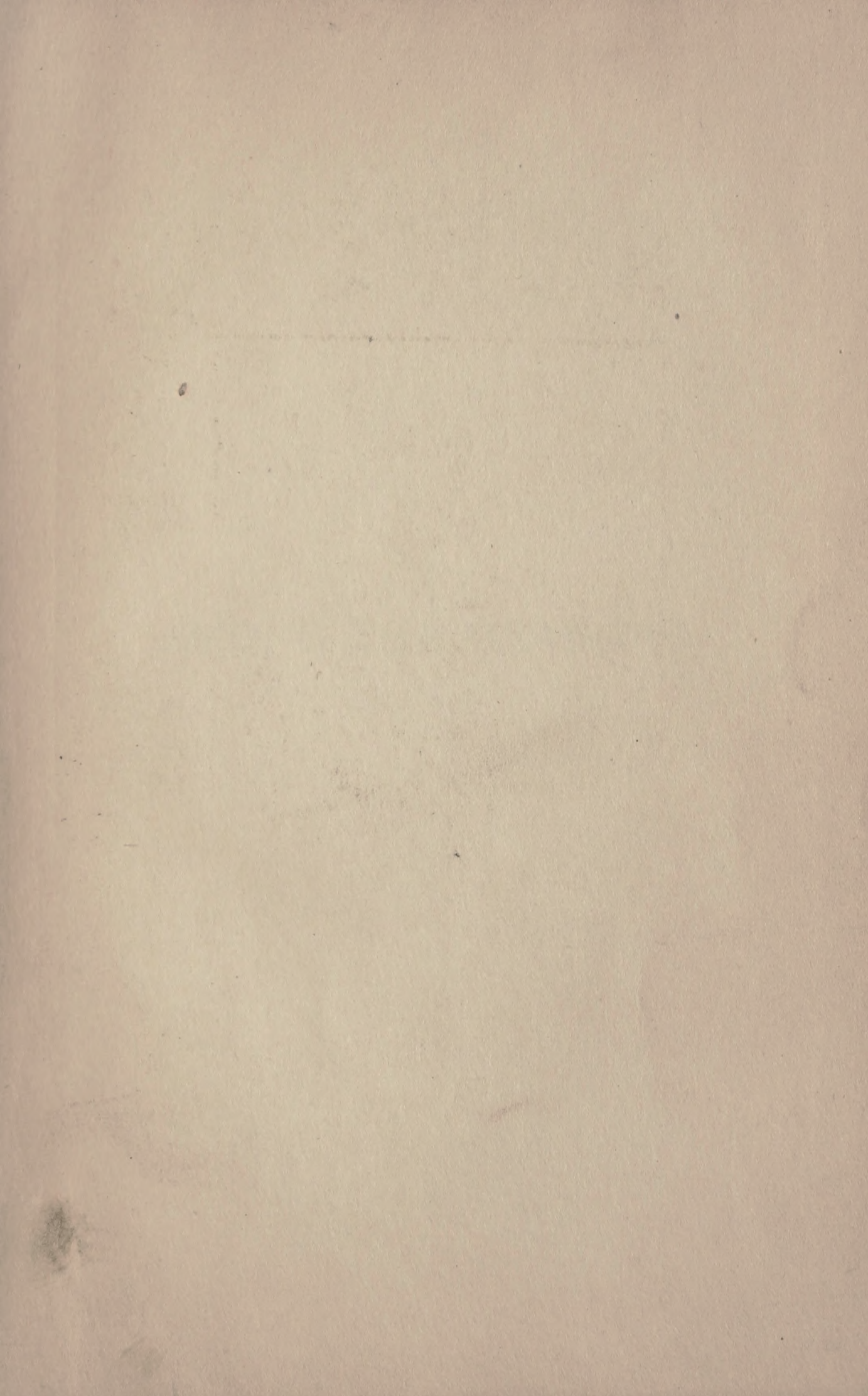


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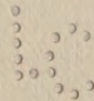


Among the Meadows

A Novel

BY

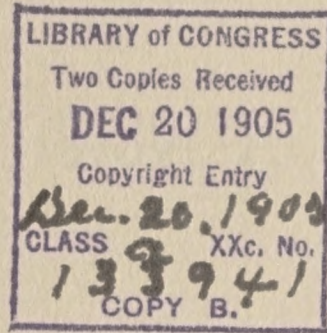
FRANCES ALLEN HARRIS



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AMONG THE MEADOWS

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CHAPTER I

On a bluegrass knoll in northern Kentucky, was a two-story brick dwelling. The house was shaped like the letter T, and in the top part of the T was the front door. The door stood open on an afternoon in June, 189—, and two women sat in the hall, sewing.

When the younger of them observed that her mother was tossing back her head, and was bringing down her chin with unusual force and frequency, she left off her work, and stared out of the door, picking her teeth with the point of her needle.

"Camilla, have you finished gatherin' that ruffle?" asked Mrs. Cliff Morgan, presently, in a tone with a sting in it.

"Not quite," answered Camilla. Then she applied herself again to her sewing.

"How many yards of ribbon have we put on this skirt?" asked the mother.

"Thirty," replied Camilla, humbly.

"And there's another ruffle to make yet! It didn't take so many furbelows to catch the beaux in my day," declared Mrs. Morgan, displaying a degree of self-complacency in the modulation of her voice. "If you don't take Bruce Turner don't you expect me to keep on flouncin' and be-ribbonin' for you. Now!" Her head went back

and her chin came down with a jerk of final decision.

"He hasn't offered himself yet, mother. A girl nowadays is forced to await the pleasure of a young man in that matter. I reckon the fact denotes the progress of women, showing their advance in patience over the girls of former generations," said Camilla, with a look of mischief in her bright, hazel eyes, and a smile about her full, red lips.

"Camilla Morgan! none o' your nonsense now. I'm talkin' sense. If you let Bruce Turner slip you'll be sorry for it some day. He owns a nice home with three hundred acres of as good land as there is in the county. Besides, he's makin' money all the time; your father said so last night."

"But this is not leap-year," said Camilla, bending over her work.

"Tut! you know he's dead in love with you. Any other girl would jump at the chance."

Camilla let the work fall out of her hands, and the smile died out of her comely face. When the sewing-machine had ceased its noise, she said:

"Mother, you know I don't want to marry anybody. If I did, I wouldn't marry a farmer, for I don't like to live on a farm."

"Not marry anybody! Why, I'd like to know? It's not a career you are wantin', is it? I've heard you talk about careers for women. While I don't know anything about your new-fangled notions, I don't believe there's anything in 'em. A career, as you call it, may fool a woman for a few years, or maybe a woman may fool herself with it for a

while, but she'll come round to wantin' a home of her own and a husband when she settles down to her senses. So I think when a girl has a good chance to marry, she ought to take it. Not wait till she's tried ever'thing else and 'as got 'bout through the cane-patch, and then has to turn round and take the crooked stick after all. 'That's my doctrine!' Her head went back and her chin came down over the flounce which she was placing on the skirt of the organdy gown.

Camilla sat swaying herself uneasily on the rear posts of her chair; first bumping the back of her head against the door, and then coming down on the floor with her toes.

"Go put on the waist of the dress," commanded the mother. "I want to fit it, so I can sew on it while you finish the skirt. I'm anxious to get it off my hands, out of the way."

Camilla settled herself on the chair's all-fours for a moment, and then rose to obey.

The room on the right of the front door was the parlor; the one on the left, was Mr. and Mrs. Morgan's bed-room, which was used also as the family sitting-room. These two rooms formed the arms of the T in the design of the building.

It was into the latter that Camilla went. And on the foot of the bed she saw the piece of organdy which was intended for the berth on her gown. She caught it up, carried it to the mirror, and noted the different effects as she arranged it about her shoulders.

"I like the elaborate style best," she thought; "it argues so well for the place that I would select

for playing my part in life's drama. I long for the city and its fussy ways. I'm tired, so tired, of living where I can see nothing nor nobody. Yes, I know I have more beaux than any other girl in the neighborhood."

Just then Mrs. Morgan bustled into the room to do the fitting. She went to Camilla, moved her chubby fingers over the plump figure, and said:

"It needs takin' up on the shoulders and lettin' out a little under the arms."

"Let me show you about the berth," Camilla begged, rearranging it after her preferred fashion.

"No, no; it ought to go *this* way," said Mrs. Morgan, laying the article in the position of her choice.

"Please, mother?" pleaded Camilla.

"*This* is the way it ought to go." Mrs. Morgan stepped back, viewed the arrangement with satisfaction, and said, "Now, that's it!"

Camilla was disappointed; her chin became as nearly pointed as was possible. However, she apparently acquiesced in her mother's arrangement of the berth. And when Mrs. Morgan returned to the hall, Camilla shouted a merry laugh.

"A berth is designed for the pleasure of some one," the girl thought. "And, as my berth is evidently not for my pleasure, it must be for mother's. I hope mother 'll enjoy it." And she laughed again as the idea strengthened.

The laughter convinced Mrs. Morgan of the wisdom of her ways, provoking a confidence to the arm of the sewing-machine:

"She'll decide to marry Bruce Turner after a while, too. She won't hold to them fool notions long. It just comes from readin' them 'new women' papers. Folks have run out of something to write about, that's all. As if a 'new woman,' as they call 'em, wasn't ever' whit as much a woman as a old one. Any sensible body knows that it's better for a girl to marry when she's got a good chance than it is for her to live an old maid. Career, nothin'! It's mostly old maids, I'm sure, that writes all this nonsense—them that never had a chance such as Bruce Turner. If they think I can't see through 'em, they're mistaken. I'll not let 'em fool a daughter of mine if I can help it."

If Mrs. Morgan had been fully aware of the kind of career which her daughter earnestly desired, the situation might have presented a less distressing aspect to her. While Camilla really did not wish to marry at that time, she entertained no desire to apply herself seriously to any profession. She was tired of the life which she led, and wished for social contact with other young people, and for the pleasures incident to residence in a city. But Mrs. Morgan had never lent a sympathetic ear to her children: she commanded them.

Camilla replaced the bertha on the bed, with a lingering touch, thinking, "I don't blame you, for you look as if you 'ud rather help a girl look well than make her look plain. When I wear you, I'll know you are doing your best anyway. It will amuse me to think how well we might have looked if we hadn't been so snipped."

Then she joined her mother in the hall. They plied their needles diligently until the clock on the mantel-shelf in the living-room warned Mrs. Morgan that she must assist in the preparations for supper. For harvesting was in progress, and extra farm-laborers would be there again that evening. Mrs. Morgan rose to go, saying:

"Push the machine back by the stairway, and pick up the scraps."

"What must I do then?" asked Camilla.

"Go feed the chickens, and then drive up the turkeys; for Jim is helpin' in the field, and won't be in till dark." Mrs. Morgan stepped back from the living-room, vigorously tying her blue and white checked apron around her short, thick waist.

Then she walked briskly through the room to the back porch, which stretched across the end of the living-room and extended along one side of the dining-room and one side of the kitchen, forming with the dining-room and kitchen the long part of the T in the design of the building.

"Maria, what have you been doin'?" Mrs. Morgan asked of the sleek-faced negro girl, who sat on the back steps of the porch, peeling and slicing potatoes. "You ought to 've cleaned off this porch first. Looks like you can't learn that."

"But I done made the fire, Miss Jinny," said Maria.

"If you had spent the time in sweepin' the porch instead of in rubbin' that vaseline on your face it would 've helped along more."

Maria sulked and laid down her knife.

"Come on, Camilla, and feed the chickens,"

Mrs. Morgan called. Then she turned again to Maria and said:

"Let me have the potatoes, Maria, and you go get some apples to fry."

Maria got up, dragged herself to the kitchen cupboard, and took out a tin pan and put it under her arm. Then she buttered a biscuit, and laid a slice of ham on top. This lunch she carried with her to sustain her under her exertions. Leisurely she sauntered in the direction of the apple tree in the front yard, and still more leisurely she picked the fruit from the tree.

Mrs. Morgan finished the potatoes, sliced the tomatoes, and was placing the dishes on the supper-table when Maria appeared with the apples.

"Hurry, Maria!" called Mrs. Morgan. "Don't you know we are goin' to have harvest-hands for supper?"

"Yes'm, I'm hurryin'," drawled Maria.

Mrs. Morgan endeavored to stimulate the girl to livelier action by assuming a lightning-like speed herself, but Maria only recognized the advantage of permitting another to do the hurrying.

Camilla had taken the parts of the unfinished gown and laid them across the stuffed velvet rocking-chair in the parlor.

After she had put the hall in order, even to picking the bits of thread from the pile of the Brussels carpet, she passed through the front doorway into the yard. She went round the corner of the house; the big chickens greeted her with their strong, impatient calls for food, and the

little ones with their sharp, piercing cries. She took a much battered tin bucket and went out of the back yard gate toward the barn.

The wood-shed, with its stack of corded wood and pile of sticks ready for the stove, lay on her right. A stretch of bluegrass sparsely dotted with red-oaks lay on the left.

Camilla passed through the barn-shed to the crib within, and scooped the shelled corn from a box with both hands, and let it rattle into the tin pail, thinking that a chicken was an unpardonable nuisance for requiring to be fed.

Once she stooped down by the box and gathered up a single handful of the grains and let them drop back through her fingers. Then she gathered up another handful and let it fall with greater force; another, and threw it into the box with energy. She was aiming blows at her own environment, but she did not realize the fact. The act relieved the tension of her feelings, however, and enabled her to pursue the course of her errand.

She finished filling the bucket, returned to the yard, and broadcasted the corn to the numerous fowls which welcomed her.

She then brought a pone of corn bread from the kitchen cupboard and crumbled it into the coop for the little chickens.

Two mother hens, with their young broods, were confined to their home shelters. They were located a neighborly distance from each other, and so Camilla stood sentinel for both at the same time. She marveled at the greediness of the fowls

that had been fed, and wondered somewhat vaguely if people were ever like chickens in trespassing on the privileges of the dependent after they had received their own portions. At length she lifted her stick and brought it down across the back of an approaching hen. Thus disabling her worst enemy, she went to the pump and supplied the drinking-basins with fresh water.

With a final look at the mother hens, and a casual glance at the crippled fowl, which showed signs of recovery, Camilla went briskly around the house and down the gravel walk to the stile some fifteen yards away. She ascended the steps that faced the house, and went down the short ones on the opposite side of the yard-fence with that freedom of movement which nature allots to robust youth. In this instance the actions were pleasing to watch, but marked with little grace.

With her blue gingham sun-bonnet tucked under her arm, and her whitish shirt-waist somewhat awry, she wandered through the wheat-field, calling, "Pee, pee, pee."

A distant, husky voice told of a turkey's slow advance.

"Yes, but not soon enough. Old hens, why can't you bring yourselves home anyhow?" Camilla spoke aloud with only the shocks of yellow wheat for audience.

She bent over and drew an intruding head of wheat from the top of her boot. She stripped off the well rounded grains as she went through the field, thinking, "Pleasant evening walk, isn't it? So smooth."

She stumbled over a clod of earth, but recovered her former position with a laugh in her throat.

"Pee, pee, pee," she called. And another laugh rang out on the warm breeze. "Pee, pee, pee." Then still another laugh rippled forth.

"Old hen, do you know what you are?" she asked of the innocent offender when she met the first of the three big turkeys. "To my mind you're just one of the city amusements that I long for. Why, yes, you are a skating-rink." She threw a stone at another, saying, "And there's the ballroom; but hurry up, Ballroom." Upon seeing the third hen, she remarked, "Here's the opera house on this street. Your eyes, old hen, are the electric lights, reminding me of my box on the left of the stage. Why, to be sure, the curtain has risen, the play has begun—behold the actors." The mother-hen moved off, and the little turkeys trooped after her.

The sun was sinking beyond the hills. Great breadths of gold, and strips of Nile green, of red, of amethyst, and of purple were melted into the azure sky. Hues there were, too, to match the wild violet and the rose of delicate pink. The rounded brow of a green hill was crowned with a glimmer of this evening glory. From an edge of the level wheat-field stretched away a swelling slope of woodland, and among the leafy boughs a gay warbler trilled his merry song. The water played over the pebbles in a brook in the woods. A gentle wind carried the faint, delicious odor of the fresh wheat-straw hither and thither.

There was beauty to greet the eye, fragrance

the nostrils, music of the rill and of the feathered songster to delight the ear, but Camilla realized only that the sun was going down, and that her city amusements would not reach their destination before dark if the little turkeys continued to run against wheat-shocks. So she gathered up her apron and dropped the most imbecile of the flock into it.

When she arrived at the barn-yard, she heard the nubbins falling into the trough for the cows' evening feed.

Mr. Cliff Morgan had left the field earlier than his laborers and had gone to the house to feed the hogs and milk the cows.

"Milly! bring me the buckets," he called when he saw her coming.

"Yes, sir; in a minute," she answered.

Camilla, wishing to avoid any extra exertions in behalf of the fowls, delayed her obedience until she had deposited her lapful of little turkeys within their pen, adjacent to their sleeping quarters.

In the meantime, Mr. Morgan went after the buckets, saying in an undertone, "Milly's gettin' to like to have her own way 'bout things considerable. She will have it, too, if her mother don't set her foot down on it. But she never was what you 'ud call a bad child."

The spirit of the busy season was in Mr. Morgan's fingers, and he sent the streams of milk into the tin pails with unusual vigor and speed. So when Camilla came to assist her father, she found

to her secret pleasure that he had nearly finished the task.

She carried in the milk and strained it, but she did the work because it was expected of her, and not because she liked it. Maria thought that she was too busy to strain the milk soon, and Mrs. Morgan's energetic ways would not permit it to wait until it grew cold.

As Camilla went down the cellar steps with the last crock, she heard the slap of the barn-yard gate, and knew that the harvesters had come.

She lighted the lamps for the supper table. As she put them in place, her mother entered the dining-room, mopping her face with the corner of her apron, saying:

"Ever'thing on the table? Camilla, call the men in. Maria, you go and be cleanin' up in the kitchen; Miss Milly 'll wait on the table to-night."

Mr. Morgan led the way to the dining-room. He was tall, bald-headed, and smooth-faced.

When the men were seated, Mrs. Morgan said: "Only two to-night, C. D.? Why, I thought there 'ud be more."

Camilla had objected repeatedly to her father being called C. D. "Somebody 'll call him Mr. Seedy," she had said. "Then some enterprising individual will get it Hayseedy, and I shall be famed as Miss Hayseedy." But Mrs. Morgan would say "C. D."

"The others went home," said Mr. Morgan, in answer to his wife's question. Then he lifted a slice of boiled ham on his fork and served it to the person nearest him.

Camilla handed around the fried chicken, the fried apples, fried potatoes, biscuits, sliced tomatoes, butter, two kinds of preserves, milk yeast bread, cake, milk and coffee.

After the last man had retired from the table, Mrs. Morgan said energetically:

"Camilla, take your plate and get off what you want, so Maria can carry out the dishes; it's late."

"Ain't there no colored uns?" inquired Maria, as she raked the scraps from the plates.

"No, Maria; you just as well have saved your vaseline," answered Camilla, laughing.

About the time that Mrs. Morgan was trying the last bolt before going to bed, Camilla, in her room up-stairs, was planning to stay with her sister after preaching on the morrow.

CHAPTER II

It was Sunday afternoon.

In the long, low sitting-room on the east side of his house, Alvin Crane stretched his arms above his head and yawned a loud, laborious "Oh." He threw his feet over the outer, lower corner of the couch to the floor, and drew his body to a sitting posture on the side of the velvet couch.

He "Ohed" and yawned until the manifestations of his distress brought Joel and little Annie from their play in the back yard.

"Papa, what is the matter with you?" each asked.

"Why?" he said, rubbing his eyes, and drawing himself up to his full length on the floor.

"Well, we heard you makin' so much fuss, we thought maybe an old lion, or somethin', had you," answered Joel, jerking open the screen door, and thrusting in his head. "An old lion like was in the den with Daniel."

"But the lions did not hurt Daniel, did they, son?"

"They was good lions," spoke up little Annie, flattening her nose against the wire of the door.

"No, they wasn't," said Joel; "they couldn't help theirselves. God locked their jaws."

"What made Him lock their jaws?" asked Alvin.

"'Cause Daniel was a good man, and God didn't want 'em to bite him," Joel answered. "They 're so mushy."

"Mushy" was the word which the children used to set their seal of disapproval upon anything, either animate or inanimate.

"Come on, papa, and play with us," begged Joel; "you said you would."

After expelling a final yawn, Alvin pushed the screen door open wider, and stepped down to the plank walk in the back yard.

Little Annie slipped her baby fingers in her father's hand.

"Let's go get some apples," said Joel, prancing along in front.

"You must have your hat, then, baby."

"Well, you come and go with me," she said. She led her father behind the kitchen, where blocks and bottles stood arrayed in ribbons of many colors and bright strings of various texture.

"What's all this?" Alvin asked, as little Annie ran to pick up her hat off the ground.

"They are our people goin' to church," answered Joel.

"Now!" said little Annie, replacing her hand in her father's. Then the three turned in the direction of the orchard.

The children pounced upon the inferior fruit as Alvin knocked it from the tree.

The father selected some of the best apples, and then he and the children returned to the house.

Alvin Crane was of medium size, with pale blue eyes, light hair, and light mustache. As he sat in the back yard, leaning his chair against the house and looking down at Joel and little Annie

on the grass, his face expressed a sense of responsibility for the training of these little ones.

"Son, who was the first man?" he asked, resorting to his method of instruction, customary on Sunday afternoons.

"Eve," spoke up little Annie, rolling away from her apples which she had placed in a nest of grass.

"Eve was the woman," prompted Joel; "Adam was the man."

"Who were their children?"

"Cain and Abel," answered Joel. "Cain worked the ground, and Abel minded the sheep."

"I wish I had a sheep," said little Annie.

"It would knock you over," said Joel, in a voice of warning.

"Well, Abel's didn't," piped the baby voice.

"They do though nowadays, don't they papa?" Joel said. "I don't want any sheeps knockin' me over." Joel lay back on the ground, and threw his heels in the air, expressive of his aversion to a combat with a sheep.

"Which was the good one, and which was the bad one, baby?" asked Alvin.

"Abel was the good one, 'cause he had the sheep, and Cain was the bad one, 'cause he didn't, I reckons." Little Annie climbed into her father's lap and tucked her head against his bosom.

"Who was the meekest man?" pursued the questioner.

"Moses," answered Joel.

"The strongest man?"

"Samson!" said Joel. "I would like to be like Samson if it wasn't for all that hair; it would be as

bad as them curls I wore when I was a little boy. Besides, people might think I was a woman."

"Who were cast into the furnace of fire?"

"I don't know that," responded Joel.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego."

"What mushy names!" exclaimed Joel, with a whistle.

And Alvin Crane related the story of the three Hebrew children.

"I wouldn't like to be them," sobbed little Annie, sympathetically.

"But they didn't get burnt," said Joel.

"Why not?" asked the father.

"'Cause they trusted God," answered Joel.

"If we trust God, shall we get hurt?" continued the father.

"What is trustin' in God?" asked Joel.

"It's believing what God tells you is so. See, these Hebrew children believed that He would help them, and He will help us, too, if we look to Him." Alvin was secretly astonished at the wisdom of his counsel. As the truth of his teachings settled upon his conscience, he grew restless. So he said:

"Come, let us take a walk."

"Oh, let's ask Aunt Milly to go," said Joel.

"Let's do," said little Annie, following her brother up-stairs.

"I don't 'spect she'll want to be bothered if she's asleep," said Joel, on the eve of opening Camilla's door.

"Aunt Milly, Aunt Milly," called Joel when he

was within the room. "Oh, she is asleep," he whispered to little Annie.

"Aunt Milly, don't you want to go?" asked little Annie, leaning on the side of the bed.

"Go? Go where?" Camilla opened her eyes and closed them again.

"To walk," answered Joel. "Maybe we can find some snakes if papa 'll go to the branch."

"Or f'owers," said little Annie.

"No; I don't want either this afternoon," said Camilla, groaning.

"Well, I'll bring you some f'owers," said little Annie.

"And I'll bring you a snake," said Joel. "But I thought maybe you would rather kill it yourse'f."

"No—all right—go 'long," said Camilla, sleepily.

"Come on," said Joel. And the children ran back to their father.

"She ain't comin'," said Joel. "Which way, papa? Let's go to the branch."

"All right."

So the three went out of the sitting-room, across the yard, to the street.

The hot air of the summer afternoon was made tolerable by a stirring breeze.

The father sauntered on, holding little Annie's hand. Joel, with his half-grown shepherd dog, Nep, ran along the pike in front, raising a cloud of dust.

Upon arriving at the toll-gate, Joel stopped and waited for his father and sister. When they came up, he said:

"Papa, let's climb the fence and go through the field?"

"Very well," answered Alvin, stooping under the pole.

The children laughed because they could walk under without bending.

"You could, too, when you was a little boy, couldn't you, papa?" said Joel, consolingly.

Farther on Joel climbed the fence and Alvin helped little Annie over. Nep barked and ran along by the side of the fence until he and Joel together discovered a crack large enough for the dog to pass through.

The field was grown up in grass and weeds, and so the father took little Annie on his back. Joel occasionally added fuel to the coals of his perseverance by saying:

"I 'ud rather walk through it though then be a girl. I would."

When the party arrived at the stream, Alvin lowered little Annie to the ground with a sense of considerable physical relief, for she was heavy for a child of four years.

Alvin looked about for a comfortable place, and finally settled himself at the foot of a water-oak.

The roots of the tree came out here and there. The children found pleasure in the number and variety of the seats, and changed from one to the other in quick succession.

Nep selected a berth between two protruding roots, and curled up snugly for a nap.

Several yellow butterflies lighted on the bank

a few rods away, and Joel and little Annie ran to catch them.

At length the children scampered back to show their treasures to papa, and with him deposited them. Then they sped away to pluck some blossoming weeds.

As they crammed each little left hand, they chattered about the flowers looking so very pretty and smelling so very bad.

"We'll give 'em to papa," said little Annie; "he won't mind."

Alvin Crane sat, leaning his back against the tree. His arms rested on his knees, and his right hand served as a lid for the other which held the children's butterflies. He watched Joel and little Annie in their enjoyment, free from the anxieties and responsibilities with which mature years had freighted his own life. He first regretted that his own childhood could not have lasted always, and then that the children could not continue as they were. His reverie was interrupted by the children coming up and little Annie saying:

"Papa, here is some f'owers for you." And she placed them on his knee, while Joel laid his carelessly on the ground beside his father.

"Put 'em on, papa," said little Annie. "Oh! you can't without a pin, can you?" She searched the front of her small frock, and then looked on the lapel of her father's coat, picked out a pin, and fastened on the flowers.

"They don't smell good," objected he.

"But they looks so pretty, papa."

Alvin took his hat, dropped in the butterflies,

and spread his handkerchief over the inverted brim. Then he gathered up Joel's scattered flowers, selected some of the finest among them, and pinned them on the other lapel.

"Now you looks so pretty, papa," said little Annie, swaying her body with a gratified air.

"Do you like 'em, son?"

"Yes, sir; I like 'em. I like 'em better on you though then I would on myse'f. They smell too bad."

Alvin smiled and looked at Joel, who lay on his stomach, supporting his face with his hands, and striking the ground with first one set of toes and then the other. The yellow hair curled loosely about the fair face. The nobly-shaped head and quick gray eyes indicated to the father a promising youth.

"They looks pretty, I think," chirped little Annie, from her seat near Nep.

"Who made the pretty flowers, baby?"

"I know," spoke up Joel; "God made 'em. He makes ever'thing."

The father said that a little bird might have carried the seeds, or the wind might have blown them thither. They lay on the ground, probably, until God sent His sunshine and His rain, and then the pod burst, and the plant grew.

"That's the way God makes 'em, is it?" asked Joel. "God has different ways of makin' things, hasn't He? He makes the butterflies, but they don't grow on stems, do they?"

Alvin explained the development of the butter-

fly, much to the pleasure and astonishment of the children. Then he said:

"One time God made a little baby smaller than you are, Annie. That little baby grew to be a man, and that man was nailed on a cross. Who was he?"

"Jesus," answered Joel.

"Jesus loves you and little Annie, and He wants you to do right, so you will go to heaven when you die."

"Well, I loves *Him* to," said little Annie.

"Jesus was a little boy once, just my size, wasn't He?" said Joel. "I reckon people just get good after they are men."

"Little boys can be good too. Badness makes dirty places on the soul. Jesus can get it clean afterwards, but the dirt leaves scars."

"Whew!" exclaimed Joel. Then he slid down the bank into the shallow brook.

He splashed along in the water. His slipping now and then brought forth shouts of laughter from little Annie as she followed on the bank.

Finally, the attitude of spectator became unsatisfactory to her, and she called to her father, saying:

"Papa, I want to get in too."

Alvin rose, stretched his stiffened muscles, and went to little Annie. She was trying to tuck up her little pants in imitation of her brother, who had rolled the legs of his trousers to his thighs. The father completed the arrangement the best that his bungling fingers could, and lifted the child into the water with the warning:

"Be careful, or you'll fall. Hold up your dress."

In compliance, little Annie rolled the front of her frock to her arm-pits. The back swept the top of the water or dragged beneath as the depth of the water varied.

Alvin thought that little Annie looked very pretty as she waded up the stream. Her golden curls framed a face of regular features. Her large, blue eyes sparkled with joy, and her red lips opened and closed over pearly teeth, as the pleasure became more or less exhilarating.

Nep splashed in and out of the water.

"I must get Aunt Milly's snake," Joel said, after a while.

"Aunt Milly's snake?" said Alvin. "Oh, she doesn't want a snake."

"I told her I 'ud bring her one."

"Come on; we must go home now," said the father. "Here's the bridge. We'll go by a different way this time."

As Joel ascended the bank, he slipped down into the mud.

"Whew!" he said, and then dipped up one handful of water after another and washed the seat of his pantaloons.

"Now, I'm all right!" he declared. "Mamma won't get me." The child climbed out near his father, who was drying the feet and legs of little Annie with his handkerchief.

"Here, son." And Alvin wiped this pair of feet and legs.

The party climbed through a pair of bars, and went up the pike, home.

Camilla could not go back to sleep after the children awoke her. So she got up, and by and by went down-stairs into her sister's room.

When Camilla entered, Nina looked up from her novel, and Camilla said:

"The kids woke me up and I thought I'd come down and see what you were doing."

"How comes you didn't want to stay at home this afternoon? Does Bruce or anybody else know you are here?"

"Nobody knows I'm here that I'm aware of," answered Camilla, yawning. "I don't want to see anybody. Is your book any good? Oh, I want a new sensation. I think I'll go to County Court to-morrow."

"To County Court? You're a strange creature."

"Yes, ma'am; thank you. I'm going home now."

"But Alvin is not here to get your horse."

"I can get him, for that matter. He probably has on the harness."

After Camilla left, Nina changed her dowdy wrapper for a fresh percale shirt-waist and a linen skirt. While she was dressing, she wondered why her sister was discontented. She thought that Camilla could have all that heart would wish for. She, though, was married to a man who could not support her in the style to which she was accustomed in her girlhood days. Besides, the heroine of the novel which she had been reading had servants at her call, while Nina's only servant was absent on Sunday evening. As she stood before

the mirror fastening her collar, she thought of the change which her face had undergone, and attributed the altered expression to the trials she had endured. But she did not think of the different ways of enduring trials, or that her expression might be due somewhat to the manner in which she endured hers.

At length she opened the bed-chamber door and crossed the hall through which Alvin and the children had gone.

She observed them indifferently when they passed the window where she sat reading; but now she grumbled at their staying out late.

She went about, placing the lunch on the table and complaining of her distaste for domestic work.

"The first bell has rung," she murmured. "Why doesn't Alvin bring the children home? He knows I want to go to church to-night."

Alvin stepped into the room and asked pleasantly:

"Why, is it supper-time?"

"Indeed it is!" she declared. "What in the world do you want with those vile-smelling weeds on your coat? Take 'em off."

"Oh, no; they looks pretty," protested little Annie.

Alvin began apologetically:

"The children—"

"The children!" broke in Nina. "Yes; you'll do anything they want you to do. I wouldn't wear weeds to please them, I know. Weeds! now that's helpin' me to cultivate their taste, ain't it? I'll never be able to do anything with them.

Annie, what is your dress doing so wet?" she asked as she lifted the child to her tall chair. "Your father let you get in the branch, didn't he?"

"Maybe I'm glad I left Aunt Milly's snake outdoors," thought Joel, slipping into his chair, hoping to keep his mother from seeing his wet clothes.

"Go on to church, Nina, if you want to," said Alvin; "we can get along. I hear the door-bell. I expect Mrs. Barton has come to go with you."

"Put the children to bed right away," she said. "I always do when you go on Sunday night." And she left the room.

Soon little Annie began to nod between mouthfuls.

Alvin rose, carried the child into the bed-chamber, undressed her, and laid her in her bed.

He stooped over her and brushed back her curls from her face, saying, "My baby." Then he turned away with his pulse beating to the music of a broader life.

"Papa, tell me a tale," greeted Joel.

The father removed the lamp to the sitting-room. He seated himself and told over tales that had been told many times before to the same auditor.

"Now you'd better go to bed," said Alvin, when the stroke of the clock reminded him that meeting was almost over. "I forgot your pants, son. I 'spect you ought to have taken them off."

"But mamma didn't see 'em, did she?" said the child. His voice and manner indicated that the wet article itself was of small consequence.

As footsteps sounded on the veranda, Joel jumped into bed, and drew the sheet over his head.

When Nina Crane entered the room she asked her husband what he was smiling about, but he did not tell her.

CHAPTER III

Captain Morgan came up the back walk, carrying his coat on his arm. He stopped in front of his daughter, who sat on the back porch, paring apples for jelly. Then he took off his Sunday straw hat, drew his handkerchief from the hip-pocket of his linen pantaloons, wiped the perspiration from his forehead and asked:

"How is mother feeling this afternoon?"

"Better, I think; she is on the veranda."

"Why, I didn't see her as I rode up through the lawn. I'll go out there."

He crossed the porch, and entered the hall which led to the front door.

Helen put her pan on top of the jar into which she had thrown the prepared fruit. Then she rose and placed a lunch on the table for her father.

She raised the drop-leaf of the table, drew out the leg carefully, and held this with one hand, while she laid the leaf in position with the other.

This table was cast aside many years ago as useless. But when the fire destroyed Captain Morgan's home, the table was saved while more valuable articles were left to burn. Now it served as dining-table. It stood in the kitchen during cold weather, and on the back porch in warm weather.

"Mother, did you come out by yourself?" asked Captain Morgan of the pale-faced little woman on the veranda.

"Helen helped me," answered Mrs. Morgan, in

a voice that told of suffering. "I wanted to go out where she was, but it was too warm there." She nervously twisted and untwisted one set of thin fingers about the other.

"Don't set up too long," said the captain. He sat down on the top step and leaned against a post. "This has been a hot day," he remarked; "but I never saw a bigger crowd in town in my life, I think."

"What do so many men go for, anyhow? You never see any ladies, do you?"

"No; not many ladies. I don't know what so many men do go for; some have business, of course, and a good many go just because others go, I reckon."

"If that was a crowd of women, goin' just to be goin', wouldn't you men talk about it though?"

"If it was my wife and she wanted to go 'long with the other women, I wouldn't say a word," he replied, with a twinkle in his blue eyes. "I just wish she could." He reached up and patted her hands. Then the twinkle was replaced with a look of sadness. Taking a bottle of medicine from his hip-pocket, he handed it to her.

"Yes, I forgot to tell you to bring it," said Mrs. Morgan. "I never thought of it this mornin' till you were out of sight. But I have been thinkin' about it off and on all day."

"Before I got to town I remembered that I hadn't asked you how near out you were. I had it on my mind all mornin' until I went and got it, thinkin' then I 'ud be on the safe side."

"Take it in the room with you, won't you?"

You'd better go 'long and get your dinner. Helen is ready for you by this time, I expect."

"I'm not hungry much, but I reckon I better eat a snack. I ought to change my clothes first though."

He picked up his hat and placed it over the bald spot on his head, around which was a fringe of curly, sandy hair streaked with white. He got up, and with long strides swung his tall, angular figure into the first room on the right of the front door. This room served as sleeping apartment for him and Mrs. Morgan and as the family sitting-room.

As he put on his shabby and somewhat soiled clothes, he groaned. He tried to conceal his sufferings in Mrs. Morgan's presence. For he realized that she, in her feeble condition, required all the cheer that he could give her. But when alone he often gave vent to his feelings in this way. And to-day he indulged himself still further, by saying:

"I wouldn't have thought that I would ever have to put on clothes just because they were old and dirty. I wouldn't have thought it! That's bad 'nough, but if that was all, it wouldn't matter much. If it was only myself who had to suffer, it wouldn't be so bad. For Helen and mother to have to suffer, though, it makes me right sick." He closed the closet door, and then opened it, and gently pushed within the white muslin wrapper which had prevented the door's fastening, thinking:

"That's mother's. Poor mother! If she hadn't

got hurt it wouldn't be so bad. But now, when she's an invalid, and needs a comfortable home, I have to see her live in this four-room shanty and suffer. If it was just myself who had the troubles to bear I could see how the Lord might have meant to take my mind off worldly affairs and make me think about Him and the hereafter."

He sank into a chair, and looked out of the side window into the yard. He saw nothing within view; he was only thinking:

"Once I had money in the bank, money to lend; but that security debt took all that, every cent, and more besides. Then one streak of bad luck followed right after another. Finally, I was so pressed that I sold off some of my land. The fire swept away my house and barn. The cholera killed my hogs. My cattle died. Wonder why it all should have happened? Maybe my way of livin' had something to do with it. I don't know. Nobody knows about things like that, I reckon." He shifted his position, and continued:

"It looks like the Lord might have saved me all this if he just would have done it. I used to pray; yes, I know that. How did I pray though? I want to be honest about the matter. What did I ask the Lord to do? As well as I can remember, I think I asked Him to help me prosper in the world. Really, I think I put 'bout all the pressure I could on the Lord to get Him to lift up Captain Morgan in the eyes of the world. I wanted the world's gaze directed at Captain Morgan, and the world's finger pointed at Captain Morgan as a Somebody.

"I used to swell with pride when I met the men on the streets in town, or 'long the pike, and they lifted their hats, and said, 'How-do-you-do, Captain Morgan.' For they spoke with an air of respect due to a Somebody.

"To-day I met some of the same men, and they hurried on, barely grunting, 'Mornin' Cap.' Once I looked down at my clothes, but they was all right. I couldn't make it out at the time, but I know now. They knew I wasn't livin' in my fine house, and was havin' hard luck. So it didn't make any difference, they thought. It served me just the same as if they had slapped me in the face, and said, 'You are a Nobody now.'

"Why did I ever care about folks callin' me a Somebody, anyhow? God don't look down on folks because they haven't got anything. That don't make 'em a Nobody in His eyes.

"O God, teach me how to be a Somebody in Thy sight," he spoke aloud. Then he fell on his knees, and poured out his heart with a fervor which he had never known in his prosperous years.

He rose determined to serve the Lord in the Lord's way, and not with the hope of using the Lord to advance his temporal interests.

"Father, your dinner is waiting," called Helen.

"Oh! I forgot the child was expecting me. I forgot the dinner." He left the room, and passed down the hall to the porch.

"Child, I didn't mean to keep you waiting so long," he apologized, as he drew out the chair, and seated himself at the table.

"Never mind, that didn't keep me from my work," replied Helen, again putting aside her apples to serve the few dishes.

"Set down, I can wait on myself," said the captain.

As Helen resumed her work, her father asked:

"What have you been doing to-day? Have you drawn any?" Then he remembered that he had intended giving her the best training with her pencil and brush. Now he could not. "O God, it is hard!" he thought.

He never knew that Helen did not reply to his questions. When he looked at her again, he supposed that her weary expression was due wholly to physical strain. So he said:

"Get me a knife, and I'll help you in a few minutes."

Her protestations availing nothing, Helen rose, unfastened her apron, and tied it around her father's neck. Then she placed a pan of apples in his lap.

She learned her methods of household management partly from her mother's suggestions and partly from personal experience. Her father watched her as she moved about the porch, discharging some of the many small duties that are connected with housekeeping, which make little show when done, and count for much when omitted. And Captain Morgan secretly lamented that his daughter could not be free to employ her time in pursuits better designed to promote culture. So with both pleasure and pain he observed the tall, graceful figure; the mass of auburn hair,

from which had strayed tiny ringlets as if to pay independent tribute to the fair skin; the soft brown eyes which revealed to him a nature fitted for the highest things. He groaned aloud, letting his knife fall against the side of the pan.

The noise arrested Helen's attention, and she thought that her father had been napping. So she said:

"You are tired; you have had a long ride. Go lie down. I'll soon finish the apples." And she took the pan, removed the apron from his neck, and then seated herself at the work.

"I hate to see father do things of this kind, and he will insist on helping me. I breathe more freely now that he is up and out of that apron." These were her thoughts as she cut spots of decay from some of the pieces which her father had thrown into the jar. "He did not notice, and I could not risk wounding him by telling him that he wasn't doing it right.

"How coarse this makes my fingers look! But it's no use to try to keep them nice. Oh, it's dreadful to have to be always doing things that I don't like to do, and to have no time for the things that I like! I wish I could have a chance to draw! When I am through, I'm so tired that I can't draw then to do any good. It's dreadful!" And she shaped a slice of apple into a D, and laid it on a jar of fruit.

She looked at the letter and thought: "That D ought to be larger, for so many things in my life come under the head of dreadful. There are cooking, washing dishes, churning, sweeping, and

many more." And she took a whole apple, and fashioned it into a thick, chunky D. She got up and hung it on the post near her, and took the smaller letter and hung it on top of the other.

"Dreadful! dreadful!" she exclaimed, sinking back into her chair. "How I wish there had been no losses, no fire, no injury for mother. It's a wonder she didn't get burned up in the house. If they hadn't found her when they did she would have burned. As it was, that heavy piece of timber nearly crushed the life out of her. Her suffering has been awful! awful!" And she made the letter A from a piece of apple, and tossed it out on the pavement.

"When father sent for me to come home, rather back from my visit, and I found mother about to die, and the house gone, I thought it would kill me. Kill me!" And a K flew from under her knife, and fell at the foot of the plum tree in the yard. "But I didn't die. I don't see why I didn't. I thought for a while I surely should."

She rose, went to a bench in the yard, and brought back another jar, into which she put half of the fruit. Then she placed the jars on a shelf, and finished filling them with water.

She returned to the pan of rejected pieces, thinking: "The pigs would like to have these. The pigs! I didn't have to think what the pigs would like to have in the old days. And I draw back my skirts from them now.

"But I give you the scraps anyhow, don't I?" she said a few minutes later, knocking the pan against the fence. "And you would just as soon

have them from an unwilling hand as a willing one, wouldn't you? It does not wound your sensibilities, that I'm not a cheerful feeder of swine, does it? But you are fine fellows. I like you well enough; it's that I don't like doing for you."

Then she lifted her skirts to her shoe-tops and walked away, driving her heels into the ground with force.

The lengthening shadows on the bluegrass gave warning that many errands remained to be done before night. So Helen hastened on, and about her duties.

Mrs. Morgan sat on the veranda that afternoon longer than usual. Her room was very warm, for one reason. For another, Captain Morgan entertained her with the news that he had gathered during the morning.

After talking a while Mrs. Morgan asked:

"Did Mrs. Ross invite them to spend the summer, or did they come for just a week or two?"

"Well, I never asked," answered the captain. "I suppose for just a week or two, but I don't know."

"Was it a jam-cake, or a cream-cake that Nina was bakin' this mornin'?"

"Well, I don't know," confessed the captain, humbly. "She came down to the stile, and called to me as I was passing, and wanted to know how you were. She had some flour on her apron, and she folded one side of it over the other, saying she was baking cake."

"A cream-cake, I expect, for she likes cream-cake. Alvin likes jam-cake the best. She has

that sometimes when she has company, I think; but just for themselves she usually bakes cream-cake. At least I think so from what I've heard her say. She didn't say who went with Camilla to-day, did she?"

"No; she didn't say."

"Did you see Camilla?"

"Yes; I met her on the street."

"What was she doin' there?"

"Well, I asked her how she happened to be there to-day. She said she had never been to town on County-Court day, and she wanted to see what it was like." Then Captain Morgan secretly congratulated himself for having asked all necessary questions in that instance.

"Camilla likes to see just to be seeing, I think. She is dissatisfied at home for some reason. I heard her talkin' to Helen the other day. It's a shame for a girl to be dissatisfied when she has a nice home, and ever'thing nice around her. She ought to appreciate what her parents have done for her. Is she goin' back home to-night?"

Captain Morgan scratched his head. His thoughts beat about like a startled canary in a cage when the sticks are out. There was nothing on which to light, and he was forced to admit that he did not ask.

"Well, I could find out more in an hour than you can in a week," said Mrs. Morgan. "Did Mr. Conway say that his wife's sister would leave Friday or Monday? You never asked, did you?" A faint smile crossed the wan face. "I don't know what 'tis you men talk about."

The captain leaned over, and stroked his wife's hair apologetically, saying:

"If you just knew it, mother, white hair is more becoming to you than black hair."

"Now, father, don't!" A reflection was forming itself into a sigh when the pair were startled by a voice which said:

"I think so too."

"Why, Uncle Dan! How are you? Come in. I didn't see you." Captain Morgan advanced toward the visitor, and extended his hand. "The vines are so thick we can't see through 'em very well."

"Uncle Dan" was the title that Mr. Richardson's pocket of sweetmeats and ready stories won for him from the children of the neighborhood. Older people followed the example, and he came to be thus familiarly addressed by all. But the heavy suit of brown hair showed only a few streaks of white, and the deliberate movements of the stout figure were not from old age.

"I thought I 'ud ride by, an' see how Mrs. Morgan was, as we hadn't heerd in several days," Uncle Dan said.

"She's feelin' some better this afternoon," said the captain. He believed that she was, and Mrs. Morgan, did not undeceive him, though she thought, "How little they all know about it."

"I'm suttently glad to hear it! Bruce an' I was talkin' 'bout her las' night. I was tellin' him 'bout how pooty she was when she was a girl. Bruce he said she was pooty yit."

"Uncle Dan, I think I must look very bad, or

you all wouldn't take so much trouble to tell me how well I look," said Mrs. Morgan. "It wouldn't matter to me how I looked if I could feel well." And she thought that she did not care; but now as she was still regarded as pretty, she spoke with a new sense of indifference toward her good looks.

"Did Bruce buy a horse to-day?" asked Captain Morgan. "I saw him looking at one."

"Buy a horse?" said Uncle Dan. "Shucks, if he didn't! I tole him I 'ud ride the horse home, an' so Bruce he went on an' lef' me. An' as soon as I clapt the saddle on the critter, don't you know he commenced to rear and plunge. I sez, 'Hello, don't you know you've got to pack Uncle Dan home? Uncle Dan ain't a-goin' to walk it.' Well, sir, when I put my foot in the stirrup, it started him off like a whirligig. I managed to git in the saddle at las', an' then I tapped him with one heel, not knowin' jes' what to expect from him. Lan' sakes! his hind heels flewed up in the air jes' like they'd been called on fer to do so. An' as I didn't want to figger at gittin' on agin, I clamped my arms round his neck an' swung to him fer dear life. He must 've thought I meant to choke him, fer he lit out from there as fas' as them heels of hisn could take him. I whoaed to him, an' I whoaed, but, sir, go he would. He 'ud pay no 'tention to me. Shucks, if he would! Onct I straightened up, an' that sent him to rearin' an' plungin' agin. Atter that, I was glad 'nough to stay stretched out, fer I thought mebbe I could live through the runnin.' I passed some fellers on the pike, an' they ast me what was the matter, but

I couldn't explain to my own satisfaction, nor to theirs. So if you hear Uncle Dan got drunk in town to-day, you tell 'em it wasn't him, it was his horse."

As soon as her laughter would permit, Mrs. Morgan asked:

"Did you get home all right?"

"Well, yas'm; I got home. But I ain't a-ridin' him this time. Who do you reckon seen me goin' through the performance of gittin' started?"

"Don't know," admitted Mrs. Morgan.

"Camilla. Camilla was goin' 'long by the stable when I was fetchin' the horse out. I holloed to her, an' she stopped to see who it was. I tole her I was goin' to ride a new horse home. I got on, or tried to, an' the horse he commenced. Miss Milly she did laugh. I bet she thought she was paid fer her trip to town. She didn't have no business in town to-day, nohow. Miss Helen wouldn't 'a' been ketched on the street if she could 'a' helped it when there was sech a crowd o' men there, but Camilla, shucks! Gib my regards to Miss Helen." And Uncle Dan rose to leave.

CHAPTER IV

Sunday afternoon was bright and warm. Bruce Turner put the harness on his horse, and led her to the well in the back yard, where he poured fresh water into a basin for her to drink. Then he fastened her to a cedar tree which stood near.

This tree was planted by Bruce Turner's great-grandfather, and was therefore held in reverence by succeeding generations. While the thought of removing it would have been an unholy one to the present proprietor of the homestead, the practical young man of five and twenty believed that he made the best use of it possible; for, through the iron staple which he had driven into the tree, he frequently fastened a hitching-strap.

"Be still, old girl," he said, somewhat affectionately on this occasion as he stroked the long black mane. This, however, was a superfluous command, for Venus showed no special signs of restlessness then, nor did she ever, except when left standing to a vehicle. And this aversion of hers was always properly respected.

But Bruce's lips had given expression to more than one remark during the afternoon of which his mind had taken little cognizance. For he had been busy framing a certain proposition.

When he was in college he composed orations, and delivered them. He even spoke on several public occasions. At his first appearance, it is true that his voice trembled for a few sentences, but he shifted his weight to the other foot, and

recovered his self-command. He bestowed thought upon the composition of these speeches, to be sure, but the character of the present address rendered the labor much more difficult than the former tasks were.

On this Sunday afternoon he believed that he could have composed an oration on a stated subject, and have delivered it before a vast audience with all ease. But with what he must do, he struggled violently. First, he framed an eloquent discourse on "The Necessity of Love for the Highest Development of Mankind." This he considered would serve his purpose admirably, but decided that Camilla would be sure to laugh at the unusual display of rhetoric. Then he thought that he would elaborate "The Disadvantages of a Woman Always Living Single," only to recall the fact that Camilla had frequently spoken warmly of the superior advantages of "bachelor maids" over their married sisters. At length he selected "Duty That a Man Owes His Wife," as an appropriate subject to lead to the question. "That's it, exactly," he decided. "Captain Morgan's example furnishes good ideas."

He reviewed the subject, adding new touches of eloquence, as he dried his hands on the roller towel on the back porch. He drew the towel over the roller until each spot on it had served its office many times.

The scream of the roller in the socket drew Uncle Dan's attention from his newspaper.

He noted Bruce's movements for a short time in silence, and then asked:

"What's the matter with yer han's?"

"Nothing; why?" Bruce released the towel, and turned round wholly unconscious of the violence to which he had subjected the article.

"I thought mebbe," Uncle Dan said. But the expression on Bruce's face prevented Uncle Dan's saying just what he thought.

Bruce went to his bed-room, a spacious apartment on the right of the large hall from the rear entrance. Afterwards, Uncle Dan soliloquized:

"Well, he'll never be young but onct. She'll do well to git 'im too. He's a fine feller. A little hasty sometimes, mebbe. Some folks would say so, I reckon. A generouser heart, though, nobody ever had. Fine feller.

"But I ain't sure 'bout it goin' to 'gree with me to have a woman come here, mekin' things uncomfortably nice. Bruce an' me jog on pooty well as 'tis. Aunt Jane gives us plenty to eat, ef she don't put it on the table in much style. Then I kin go round here in my bare feet when it's hot, an' I couldn't do that ef there was a woman about. Shoo flies!" And he flirted a newspaper in his face, went to the pump, and drew himself a drink of water.

As he rested between swallows, he feebly articulated, "I can't say nothin', though, he gimme a home." A fact which he never admitted directly, even to himself, and always spoke of it as, "I'm stayin' with Bruce a while." This was his fourth year there.

When Bruce reappeared he was arrayed in his

Sunday clothes. The smooth fit revealed the large, well-built figure. The white straw hat sat firmly on the dark brown hair, and deepened the expression of strength in the smooth, sunburnt face. The blue-gray eyes looked out on the familiar scenes with stronger purposes than they had done before. However, in Bruce's demeanor there was a peculiar nervousness which Uncle Dan's keen gaze detected. Yet any admission of such knowledge Uncle Dan sought to avoid by saying:

"Ready? I'll hitch up fer you, then." Uncle Dan frequently put Venus to the buggy for Bruce on Sunday afternoons, out of deference for "the boy's" Sunday clothes.

"Well, I 'ud leave off my coat till I got there," said he.

The remark afforded Bruce a momentary escape from his deep thoughts. Soon, however, his mind leaped back to its former channel. And as he drove along, he became oblivious of the little graveyard on the hillside in which some of his ancestors lay; of the green field to his right in which grazed several head of cattle and some of the large horses of which the county is justly proud. He turned round the corner of the rock fence, and went past the strip of woods to the pike-gate.

When Bruce was a child his father died, and during his senior year at college his mother died. He had no brothers nor sisters. But he thought that he was fortunate in his occupation. He averred that hoeing and plowing made him feel

strong and honest. Horses he loved with the ardor that courses through the veins of all true Kentuckians.

He collected choice books, which he delighted many of his spare hours. The majority of these he kept in a large walnut bookcase in the front end of the hall.

Thither Uncle Dan repaired after Bruce's departure. He selected a volume of Shakespeare "to see what it's about." Then he seated himself, book in hand, on the front veranda, and tilted his chair against the brick wall. He read a few lines, and then looked out on the front yard, and said, "I 'ud thought a boy of his build would have chose a book with more meanin' to it then this has got; but there's no accountin' fer a feller when he's in love."

Uncle Dan really did not desire to see what Shakespeare "was about," or what any other book "was about," for that matter. He only equipped himself thus to keep from thinking about Bruce's marrying.

But as the book proved to be very dull to him, his resolutions failed, and he speculated concerning Bruce's chances:

"Well, mebbe she won't have 'im after all. His property won't cut any figger with her, I 'low. Not that she don't like money well 'nough, but she's always had a plenty, an' so she don't act'ally know what a good thing 'tis. Her folks 'll be in fer it. But Camilla has a mind o' her own, I think, ef it's set in a-nother direction. Ef 'tis! I don't know though that 'tis. I wisht I did!

"Camilla, well, Camilla she won't mek much of a wife nohow, unless it be she 'ud quit her foolishness. And I don't b'lieve she's ready to quit that yit. I don't b'lieve she is. I think she's a long way from where she would mek a fitten wife fer Bruce. I 'ud hate to see him git bit in the trade. I know a-nother what 'ud suit 'im heap better ef he would jes' think so. But that's somethin' what a feller wants to be his own jedge about. Sometimes he ain't much of a jedge, but he ginerally thinks he is. Mebbe though Camilla won't have 'im."

While Uncle Dan was ruminating and Bruce was drawing nearer and nearer his destination, Camilla, in her bed-room, was engaged in a conversation with her mother.

"What are you goin' to put on?" inquired Mrs. Cliff Morgan of her daughter, who was lounging on a sofa near the open window. She drew aside first one dress-skirt and then another in search of apparel worthy of the occasion.

"It doesn't matter much, does it?" Camilla replied. "It doesn't matter to me," she thought.

"He hasn't seen you in your organdy," said the mother; "wear that. It's so becomin' to you." She endeavored to inspire her daughter with some of her own enthusiasm.

"I would rather not, mother," said Camilla, thinking of the despised berth.

"Why not, I'd like to know? It's the very thing!"

"Because. Because I would rather not." She

was afraid to give her real reason, and was too truthful to give a false one.

"Because ain't a good reason for anything," declared Mrs. Morgan. "When a girl has a good dress I don't see why she can't wear it."

She took down the skirt from the two hooks over which the band had been stretched, and spread it out on the snowy counterpane. Then she went to the large oak dressing-case, drew open the middle drawer, and took out the waist. She placed this on a pillow at the headboard of the heavy oak bedstead, and said:

"Get up and put it on, Camilla. It's time you was dressin'."

Camilla raised herself to a sitting posture, bringing her chin on a level with the broad wooden sill, and peered through the window. Down the road which extended along the side of the wheat-field, half way between the road-gate and the house, came a buggy. She watched a moment longer. Yes; it was he.

"It's not five o'clock yet, is it?" she asked, turning to her mother, and rising. "He wasn't to come till five."

"He's got somethin' extra to say is why he has come earlier," thought Mrs. Morgan. "Camilla, if he does—ask you, don't say 'no,' do you hear?" she said.

And Mrs. Morgan brushed up her hair on the back of her head, pulled up her collar and fastened it a little closer about her neck, saying:

"I have got to meet him, I reckon. C. D. is

out. Maria and Jim are both away, and you are not ready."

"You'd better put on the organdy yourself," spoke Camilla aloud when she thought her mother was on the stairs, well out of hearing.

Instead, Mrs. Morgan had stopped in the upper hall to adjust a hairpin, and therefore surprised Camilla by pushing back the half-open door and making this vigorous response:

"Camilla Morgan! I know if my mother had taken one half the interest in my affairs when I was a girl that I do in yours, I would have showed her more respect. But she just as leave I hadn't 've married C. D. as that I had." She could have added that her mother's opposing the marriage had strengthened her desire to become Mrs. Cliff Morgan. But she chose to ignore that feature of the circumstance and hurled another warning at Camilla: "Don't you say 'no.'" She tossed back her head and brought down her chin, as in final dismissal of the question. Then she slammed the door.

Camilla entertained no thought now of putting on any dress except the organdy. She commenced the undertaking demurely, but before she had completed her toilet her spirits rose, and she laughed at giving her mother pleasure by wearing her gown. Her amusement even lifted her to the height of her own independence. Hence she raised the lid of her trunk, took out a bow of red chiffon, and pinned it over the fastening of the berth. Thus she made the effect as nearly as

possible the same she had desired in the original fashioning of the berth.

"Now!" she said, viewing her efforts with satisfaction. "I wonder if mother is in the parlor yet." And she opened the door cautiously, tripped to the head of the stairs, and listened. Upon hearing nothing except the lamentations of the base-rocker, she went down the steps and entered the parlor.

After the exchange of greetings, Bruce proposed a drive. Camilla cordially assented, and returned to her room for her hat while Bruce went to hitch Venus to the buggy.

Mrs. Morgan, from her bed-room window, observed Camilla as she walked toward the stile, and she thought that her daughter showed more regard for her health than was her wont; for Camilla carried a wrap. This lay across her bosom, one end resting on her right shoulder, and the other under her left arm.

After leaving the stile, Camilla took off this light silk scarf, hung it on the back of the buggy-seat, and leaned against it.

When Bruce gave Camilla the reins, and climbed out to open the gate at the corner of the wheat-field, he said:

"Will you drive through, please?"

"I shall be delighted to," she replied.

Venus was not satisfied to stop just beyond the gate, but went down the hill a short distance, stepping high, and tossing her head as Camilla pulled on the reins.

"I hope you would not be delighted to drive the

entire length of the lane without me," Bruce said, smiling, as he stepped into the moving vehicle.

"I think I should not be afraid of Venus. I have heard you say that she was not vicious, that she only wanted to go."

"Thank you. You are very kind to accept my word for Venus's qualifications." And he thought of making a request for still another acceptance, but he was afraid that an unadorned way would not appeal to Camilla. So he decided to wait and bring in his more effective address.

They turned to the left at the intersection of the lane and the pike, and drove about three-quarters of a mile to Meadowville. Joel waved as the couple passed his home.

"Aunt Milly, mamma said tell gran'pa to come up here in the mornin' the first thing," cried the child from the yard. Then he leaped the fence, ran into the pike, and said, "Aunt Milly, papa is feelin' bad, an' mamma is just a-cryin' an' a-fussin'; but she didn't say for me to tell you that."

Out of regard for Camilla, Bruce let Venus go on.

"All right, I'll tell him," Camilla called out.

The pike radiated in four directions from the center of the town. After passing the corner and turning to the right, Bruce said:

"I like this way best, and I was impolite enough not to ask your choice, But I remember that you, too, have always preferred this road."

Camilla, choosing to ignore any underlying significance, said:

"You are unjust in not permitting me a woman's privilege of changing my mind."

"Unjust? Unjust to you, Camilla?" And he poured out his heart without a thought of the speech which he had so carefully prepared and placed on memory's shelf to be taken down and served on the momentous occasion. Not a thought of his fine address occurred to him until he and Camilla were returning home. Then he told her of the speech and she made him repeat it to her. Each enjoyed a laugh.

Upon turning into the lane, Camilla leaned forward and looked to see if her scarf was still in place. Bruce mistook her movements for her recognized need of the wrap, and so he unfolded it, and endeavored to place it around her, saying:

"It's my privilege."

"Not yet," said she, shrinking from the touch of his arm on her shoulder, and completing the arrangement of the scarf herself.

However, this wrap had already served Camilla's original purpose for it. It had concealed the red chiffon bow from her mother's eyes. Thus she had been assisted in a stroke of self-assertion which she felt powerless to make unless she believed that it would remain unknown to her parent.

But the avenue which the bow had opened for her was not sufficiently broad for her to turn around and combat her mother's tyranny. Now, as the knowledge of her situation swept over her with accumulated force, she drew the little scarf more tightly about her, and pulled off the bow.

She dropped the bow on the floor of the buggy, and ground it under her foot as she thought, "My own choice of life is trampled on forever, and mother's choice for me triumphs." Then she threw back the scarf and looked at the bertha by the light of the new moon.

Bruce yielded himself fully to the happiness that his first love brought him. He was only vaguely aware of Camilla's silence. Had he attempted to account for her mood he would have thought that she, too, recognized the feebleness of words for expressing the new joy.

When they arrived at the stile, she invited him to go in, thinking, "That's what mother would do, I reckon."

Camilla looked up at Bruce when he joined her in the walk, and smiled at a man's appearing pleased at being accepted by a girl who did not want him.

But Bruce's own heart was warm, and there was a glow in his conversation during his stay. When the young man asked permission to call on Wednesday evening, Camilla half wondered at herself for having to resort to the thought, "Well, I reckon mother would let him."

After his departure, she turned the key in the front door, and blew out the light in the parlor. Then she went up-stairs to her own room, sat down in the window, and watched the stars as they twinkled away just as ever, proving, as she thought, their indifference to her in her distress.

"If I could only love him," she thought, "inasmuch as I have to marry him. If mother hadn't

forced this on me perhaps I could have learned to love him; but then, how could I? I don't know what sort of a man I want to love. The truth is, I don't want to love any now. But if some one of 'em is necessary to my future happiness, as mother seems to believe (I reckon she believes that), I should like to get out in the world, and compare him with other men. Perhaps then I could find out whether he is the man I would be happiest with. But mother thinks there's no use in that. I haven't the chance of a free negro!" She rose and slammed the blinds. "Mother will be happy, I reckon," she thought; "at least she ought to be." Then she yielded to a laugh, but her laugh had a new note in it—one of bitterness.

CHAPTER V

Monday morning Camilla slumbered on till her mother called from the foot of the stairs:

"Breakfast is ready."

Camilla lingered a while, and then remembering her sister's request, got up hurriedly. She slipped into a red calico wrapper, and brushed back her hair without stopping to unbraid it.

When she entered the dining-room, only her mother sat at the table.

"Father gone?" she asked, as she closed the hall door behind her.

Without waiting for an answer, she crossed the room, and went through the door, to the porch. She looked toward the barn, and saw Mr. Cliff Morgan issuing from it on horseback.

"Father," she called, running to speak to him, "are you going to Meadowville?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Nina said for you to come up there this morning; she wants to see you."

"What about?"

"I don't know, sir."

"All right," he answered, as he rode away, thinking, "I wonder what Alvin imagines he's fitted for now."

For Nina had sent for her father on previous occasions—at times when Alvin had thought if he only had the means, he could enter upon a pursuit for which he was better adapted by nature than for the one in which he was then engaged.

Once the transition was from a farm to a law office. Through the law he expected to ascend the ladder of fame. Within a few months, however, he thought that the pinnacle was to be reached only through merchandizing.

Mr. Morgan materially assisted in these transitions with faith each time in Alvin's persuasion. Knowing now that Alvin did not realize his expectations from any of his ventures, Mr. Morgan resolved as he rode along, that if Alvin wanted more money, he would not accommodate him.

When Camilla sat down to eat her breakfast, her mother lingered apparently to sip a second cup of coffee.

"What did you want with your father?" Mrs. Morgan asked.

"Just to tell him what Nina said—for him to come up there."

"What does she want? I thought maybe—Bruce—wanted to see him."

"Well, if he does, I reckon he can find him without my assistance."

"He does then, I reckon. Does he?"

"I reckon so." Camilla drank half a cup of coffee. Then she helped her plate to hash, but rose from the table without eating anything.

"Child, why don't you eat your breakfast?" asked Mrs. Morgan. "But when I was in love I lost my appetite, too."

Mrs. Morgan got up from the table, and commenced piling up the dishes. "Don't go till you tell me 'bout Nina," she called to Camilla. "You say you don't know what she wants?"

"I don't know. Joel said his papa was feeling bad, and his mamma was crying and fussing." And Camilla laughed.

"Well, she's had enough to make her cry and fuss!" declared Mrs. Morgan, sitting down on a chair near Camilla. "Alvin has just about run as long as he can, I expect. Likely he's been tellin' Nina if he could get some more money he would do great things. I've lost patience with him. I did think at one time that he was goin' to do somethin', but I don't believe now there's anything in him, or he would 'a' done some good before this time. He has changed about too much. Poor Nina! the child would like to hold up her head."

About the same time, Nina was lamenting Alvin's hard luck to her father. "If you can let Alvin have a few hundred dollars, you won't have to help him any more," she said. "If he can get straight with his creditors once more, he thinks he can get along."

Mr. Morgan heard his daughter through, and then said:

"Nina, if I thought it best for you and the children, I would advance Alvin the money you ask for, but I don't."

"What shall we do then, father?"

"I think it would be better for Alvin to learn to rely upon his own resources. No; I can't do it this time." And he put on his hat, which little Annie had been trying on her doll, and left the room. He was too deep in thought to hear the child as she prattled:

"Gran'pa, dolly says good-by."

Nina dried her tears, and went about her morning's sweeping and dusting, thinking: "Father has been good to us. I don't blame him."

But her bitterness at the turn of affairs caused her to wish to blame some one. The manner in which her father disposed of the subject disinclined her to elect him as the object for her reproaches. So she turned upon her husband, thinking:

"Alvin ought to do better. I don't see why he can't make money; other men can. He's always thinking he will make it, but he never does it. I'm tired of hearing that we are not able to do this, and we can't afford to have that. It's we must economize here, and we must economize there all the time. I'm tired of it all, too. I don't see how he expects me to do as other people do, and to have things like other people have unless I spend money.

"Mrs. Casey over here does every bit of her shopping in Cincinnati—nearly every bit. Her children wear perfectly beautiful clothes. So many of them made by hand, too. She doesn't do it herself, either. They come over here to play with my children, and how am I goin' to let my children visit hers unless they dress as well as hers do?"

Nina failed to consider that Mrs. Casey owned a large farm near the village, and had several thousand dollars in the bank besides, but vigorously pursued her line of thought:

"Certainly I wish my children to cultivate

people who are somebodies in the world, and the right sort of a father would too, I think. I like such people myself! And I've always been used to having just as good things as anybody. I don't intend that my children shan't have them, either. No, I don't!"

She jerked the lap-board out of the closet, and seated herself by the end window in the sitting-room. Then she unfolded a piece of linen lawn. As she cut a dress for little Annie, she thought, "This is just as pretty as Mira Casey's, except I have no embroidery for it; but I will have it."

She pushed the lap-board with the cloth to the floor, got up, and wrote an order to Cincinnati for the embroidery that she desired. She left the envelope unsealed, and then sent the letter to Alvin by Joel, and told her husband in a note to put in the money for the material.

When Joel returned, Nina asked him what his father said. The child answered:

"Well, he just sorter grunted, but he looked like he wanted to say somethin'. I kept waitin' fer him to say it, but he never done it. He just told me to run 'long home."

Nina knew what construction to place upon the unspoken words. She thought, "He ought to be thankful to get off with just buying the material, for I do my sewing myself—the most of it."

As she sewed, she planned other dresses for little Annie, fashioned after some of Mira Casey's. She thought, too, of new furnishings for the house which she must have because Mrs. Casey had recently fitted up a room in the latest style.

"Alvin Crane needn't think that I intend to be looked down on by anybody!" she declared aloud.

"But he knows she will be looked down upon in earnest if she don't quit her extravagance," spoke that unobserved gentleman, stopping at the open window.

"Extravagance! That's all a man knows about such things. Did you send my letter?"

He drew the order from his pocket, and in harsher tones than he had ever used to his wife before, said:

"Nina, what makes you such a fool?" The expression afforded him relief, but he repented of it instantly.

"For shame, Alvin Crane!" Nina burst forth. "No decent man would—" And her words were drowned in sobs of anger.

Thereupon, instead of the apology which he had wished to make, he fed the flames of her passion by tossing into her lap a roll of embroidery which he had brought from his own shelves, saying:

"Here's some that's good enough, and it's much less expensive."

She looked at the trimming, and then threw it back at him, saying:

"Take your common, cheap stuff. I don't want it. I have more pride for my child than to let her wear that, I know—if you haven't."

"But where is the pay coming for the finer material? What did your father say?"

"I reckon I better not tell you just what he did say," she retorted.

"Will he let us have the money?"

"No; you will have to look somewhere else. You will have to get it for yourself."

"I rather hated for you to go to your father again, anyhow, but you thought that was the only way."

"What else was there to do?"

"Well, as a last resort," he said, climbing in at the open window, and settling himself in it, "I've thought that we can sell the house. Mr. Andrews is anxious to buy it, and offers a good price for it. We can sell it, and get out of debt, and hereafter we will live strictly within our income."

"How shall we live at all if we sell the house, I should like to know?"

"We can rent two or three rooms somewhere. Then we'll buy fewer dainties for the table and less expensive clothing, and climb up gradually to a solid footing. I am in earnest, Nina. I think that is the best thing for us to do."

"Live in two or three rooms! What would Mrs. Casey think of us? No; I shan't! I shan't move a step from where we are—not a step."

"But, Nina, that way of living would be better than being closed out of business by creditors. Almost anything would be better than that, seems to me—anything honorable." Alvin endeavored to reason coolly. "What shall we do, then?" he asked.

"I don't know what you are going to do. Manage your own way about that, but I am going to

do just as I have been doing; you can depend on that. That's bad enough, goodness knows."

Alvin rose from the window, and went to the back door of the room. Seeing their father, the children ran to greet him.

Nina left her work, went to the dining-room, and called the servant to place dinner on the table.

After going through the form of the hour, Alvin left his home,—the one place in the world where a man has a right to expect full sympathy,—more wretched than when he entered.

He walked down the street with his hands in his trousers pockets and with his head bent. He did not notice the wagon which passed him, nor see the cloud of dust that the horses raised.

He pursued his way mechanically. When he arrived at the street-crossing, he turned from the force of habit, not from positive recognition of the direction.

A crowd of loungers sat upon the store-porch. On this afternoon several farmers stopped to wait until "Crane" returned from dinner.

The half-grown boy who assisted in the store could have waited on these men, but they preferred trading with the proprietor himself. So when Alvin entered, one of the farmers followed, and purchased two pairs of socks and a paper of pins. Another went in, and asked for four spools of thread and samples of pink and white percale.

Alvin followed his customers to the door, and stood a minute, waiting to see if there were others who wished to go in.

At length he dropped into one of the chairs on

the porch. His thoughts, however, were busy with serious matters. Yet a limp smile crossed his face once or twice when the other men laughed as he sat staring at the floor and toying with his knife.

People had finished harvesting; there was talk of wheat-thrashing.

Alvin's first customer, who had stopped again on the porch before going home, said:

"Bruce Turner has cut 'bout the best wheat in the country. Bruce is a good farmer."

"He is a lucky fellow, anyway," said one of the loungers.

"I don't think it's all luck," said the farmer. "It's his fine judgment and level-headed management that count. A more likely young fellow this country has not got than Bruce Turner. Where is there another young man who, if he had been left as Bruce was, with plenty of money, would not have run through with it instead of increasing the amount as Bruce has done? Just show him to me."

"But if I'd had his money to start on I could have made money, too," said the loungeer.

"You? Well, I must be goin'." And the farmer's smile was significant.

"Good-evening, Bruce," said he, as he strode off the porch and Bruce stepped upon it; "tell these fellers how your luck comes. I'll bet you won't say it comes from wearin' out your clothes on store stiles. No, sir!" And the farmer went his way while Bruce drew near the laughing crowd.

"What are you all talking about?" asked the young man, seating himself in a chair.

A new idea came into Alvin Crane's mind like a ray of sunshine in a dark closet where woolen material supplies moth to devour its own fiber. Calling Bruce into the store, Alvin led him to the desk which stood at the rear end near the one window in that part of the room.

"I'd like to borrow a thousand dollars from you," Alvin said, at length; "can't you lend it to me?"

Bruce changed his position, for he was considering whether it would be wise to lend the money to Camilla's brother-in-law, who bore the reputation of a rolling stone. "To steer clear of an entanglement of this kind with him may prove the pleasantest for both of us in the long run," he decided.

Finally he said, varnishing the truth with courtesy:

"I would like to accommodate you, Crane, but I have use for what surplus I have."

"Can't you lend me five hundred, then?" And Alvin knocked off a deposit of pike-dust from his coat-sleeve. Then he straightened up, and leaned against the desk, crossing one hand over the other in front of him. "Bruce, my bills are due," he pleaded. "I know my creditors won't wait on me much longer. Besides, I have a few other debts. If you will lend me only five hundred."

"I can't do it, Crane," said Bruce, tightening his hold on his former decision.

"Bruce, if you could only understand how serious my trouble is, you would let me have it. I

mean to get out of debt after this and stay out; it's enough to gnaw the life out of a man." And he had determined to put forth all possible effort to do as he asserted that he would do.

Bruce gazed at Alvin, half doubting, half believing the sincerity of the statement.

"Won't you?" pleaded Alvin.

"I can't, Crane." But as Bruce walked away, he wished that he could feel quite sure of Alvin.

He did not stop with the crowd on the porch. He went to the shop to see if his wagon was ready. Finding the repairs completed, he got in and drove toward home.

The broad brim of his Palmetto hat shook and flapped and fluttered, beating a tattoo on his shoulders to the time of the rumbling wagon. His thoughts, too, jostled from one side to the other of the subject which he held in contemplation. He first condemned himself for refusing Mr. Crane the money, and then approved of the action. This wavering attitude was unusual for him; for ordinarily when he once decided a question, he stood firmly by his decision.

His faltering conduct to-day manifested itself still further. When he came to Meadowville Creek he drove along the road running parallel with it without responding to the nod of Helen Morgan. Helen passed with a bucket on her arm, going to fetch water from a spring near-by. But as Bruce crossed the stream above, he bethought himself of his rudeness, and for compensation, pulled off his great sun protector and bowed his head respectfully at Helen's vanishing figure.

Helen did not know whether the young man spoke. For the irregular outlines of his hat brim were deceiving, and her thoughts were busy with matters which she considered of greater importance to her.

When Bruce drove out of town, Alvin Crane's last ray of hope for securing the money honestly sank beyond the bleak mountain of despair. He argued with himself that he would not forge a note to get the means, but the combination of circumstances forced him to do so. Therefore before the evening train arrived at the neighboring station, he returned to his home, packed a small satchel, bade his family good-by, and set out for Cincinnati.

On the following morning he presented to a bank a note for five hundred dollars, bearing Bruce Turner's name. The signature seemed genuine to the hurried teller, and so he handed Alvin the money.

Mr. Crane paid off the indebtedness on his stock, and early in the afternoon left for home.

CHAPTER VI

On Helen's right was a rock wall which enclosed a meadow; on her left, the creek.

Three small sycamore trees grew side by side out of the steep bank and touched the face of the water with the leaves of their lower branches. As she passed these, she reached out and plucked a slender switch without recognizing any reason for the action, except that the twig offered her something tangible to grasp. For her mind was reaching out: it was seeking an opportunity to learn to draw and paint.

Of late years she had tried to set aside her yearning to become an artist, for she saw no way to get the necessary training. But in spite of her reasoning, her desire strengthened, making her inner life one of tumult.

Now, as she walked along, she wished with all her might to be rid of this desire, so that she could tread peacefully the path of humble and obscure duty.

A lizard crept out from its hiding-place among the rocks of the wall, and displayed itself in full repulsiveness. Helen's mind reverted to her homely round of every-day tasks unillumined by hope of more congenial occupation.

A grasshopper crossed the path, and pursued its course.

Helen stopped a minute to watch the insect. "Brave little fellow!" she thought, when she saw

him go through the tall grass. "But courage won't win the victory for me."

When she came to the spring, she descended the three steps which led to the water. Then she rested her hands on the moss-covered rock that formed the top to the spring, laid her head on her hands, and tried to think of a way out of her trouble.

After a short time, she filled her bucket, and then put down her dipper saying: "I can't live on this way. I just can't!"

She looked around her appealingly. Then she moved to the peppermint which grew on the hillside, and pressed one of the leaves.

An old walnut tree stood near. The log-house, weather-stained and crumbling, was on the brow of the hill where it had been during the various stages of Helen's transition from infancy to womanhood.

She sank on the grass, and buried her face in her hands because no help came. "Nothing, nobody can help me," she thought.

The aesthetic side of her nature was ever on the alert, but she did not know that God's power could bring beauty of soul out of suffering.

After a short time, she rose slowly, and moved toward the spring. She picked up the dipper and the bucket and walked in the direction of her home, for she realized the necessity of ending her self-indulgence and entering upon her evening duties.

Upon arriving at the house she carried a dipper of water to her mother.

"What kept you so long?" asked the parent, somewhat anxiously.

"I hope you haven't wanted the water very much, mother," Helen answered.

"Not that, but you."

"What can I do for you?"

"I don't want anything done for me, but what is the matter?"

"Noth-ing." Helen strung out the word. There was no outward occurrence to detain her, and she wished to avoid giving her mother unnecessary concern. Therefore, she expressed only half of the truth in her reply, but the mother's ear heard the other half in her tone.

"After you put up the dipper, come back," Mrs. Morgan requested. "I'm afraid you are not happy, my child," the mother said, when Helen returned. "I'm not blamin' you, dear. I don't wonder at it. I wish I could do the work. How I wish I could! Only God knows how I suffer on that account! I know it's hard for one so young to do drudgery day in and day out. I sympathize with you, child. I wish I could do it in your stead."

"Mother, please don't you worry. I would rather do it than have you do it." She believed that the whole truth would pain her mother even more than Mrs. Morgan's present view of the situation.

"It's bad, child."

"Now don't you mind," Helen said bravely, as she rose from her kneeling posture at the side of the bed. "Isn't there something that I can do for you before I go?"

"Bring me my work-basket." Mrs. Morgan sighed after the request.

The work-basket was on a small table along with a Bible, two newspapers, and a lamp.

Helen placed the basket by her mother's side without saying that it was too late to work by daylight, or asking if she should light the lamp; she was accustomed to complying with this request.

Whenever Mrs. Morgan was unusually disturbed on account of her inability to work, she would ask for her little basket. And she came at length to ask for her work-basket when she was unusually troubled about anything. She could not sew, however, for using her arms caused her pain.

Often she would take out a garment and examine it. Upon refolding the garment she would stick a threaded needle into it, and say, "Now it'll be ready when I want it."

Helen would frequently change the articles, and Mrs. Morgan would find in the basket, at one time, stockings to be darned; at another, a larger garment to be mended.

This time there was a wheat sack. Mrs. Morgan was unfolding the article when Helen left the room.

An hour later, when Captain Morgan carried a cup of tea and a slice of toast to the room, he found his wife asleep with her hands folded across the coarse sack which lay on her bosom.

He looked at her for a minute, and then closed his eyes, and offered the silent prayer:

"God bless her, and make her able to patch the old wheat sack if she wants to."

The invalid opened her eyes and said:

"My supper, is it? Well, I will put up my work for to-night." She folded the article over and over and laid it in the basket.

Captain Morgan placed the tray on the bed, and then lighted the lamp.

"My tea is cold," Mrs. Morgan complained. "What made you bring me cold tea?"

"I'll take it back and get you some warm."

When the captain returned to the kitchen, Helen was "setting the rising" for bread.

"Daughter," he said, "you ought to let that go to-night. I'm afraid you're not well."

"Oh! why won't they leave me alone in my misery?" she cried within herself, after her father left the room. "I try so hard to keep from annoying them with my own distresses." And two large tears escaped from eyes that endeavored to retain them.

Upon finishing her domestic duties, Helen went to assist her mother in preparations for the night. But her services were declined by her father, who said:

"I want to help mother by myself to-night, and show her how well I can do it when I try. You take yourself off to your bed."

Helen then went to her own room, back of the little parlor. She threw herself on the floor by the window, and laid her head on the sill. Then she did what many a woman, with more wisdom concerning life's ways, has done—she cried.

It was July, and the song of the katydids in the

oak tree near the window strengthened the girl's sense of loneliness.

After she had wiped away her tears, she chastised herself with the thought: "Haven't I enough to fill my life to the brim? Just look at mother's condition! I know I ought not to think of myself under such circumstances. I hate myself for it. What would mother think if she knew? What would father think? They wouldn't call me their good girl any more."

The murmuring of the creek at the foot of the hill drew her through the window for a stroll in the moon-lit yard.

When she stood by the stile, she watched the stream as it rippled along its course. She half forgot her trouble, so much absorbed was she in the sheets of light which the moon cast on the water, giving to each tiny wave a character of its own. But at length the distant bark of a dog made Helen feel lonely again, and she hastened back to her room.

She lighted the lamp and closed the blinds, questioning herself: "Didn't God give me the desire? I wonder if he didn't? I think He must have given it to me. If He did, then haven't I a right to it?"

CHAPTER VII

When Alvin Crane returned from Cincinnati he expected to raise sufficient money to make a quiet settlement with Bruce Turner before he should learn of the forged note through other means.

He reentered upon his duties, spending at first the greater part of his spare time in the back room of his shop. There he engaged in a general cleaning and straightening. When he had finished, he made changes in the larger front room. He arranged the goods more conveniently on the shelves and in the show-cases, and he polished the windows. He replaced shop-worn articles with fresh ones. What effect this work could have on the collection of a few accounts and the increase of trade was only indefinitely defined in his mind. But the improvement caused Uncle Johnny Gray to comment when he came in to buy a new stem for his cob-pipe:

"You must be tryin' to fetch Cincinnati up here, ain't you? Well, we need it; but my time fer doin' sech things is over." Uncle Johnny viewed Alvin's efforts with satisfaction, and, at the same time, regretted his own inability to keep step with the world's progress. "We ole ones air 'bleeged to swing 'long in the ole fashion," he said; "but I like to see it. You may gimme two stems; that basket you've got 'em in looks so pooty."

Alvin was pleased by the remarks, and the extra

purchase, small though it was, flattered him that the changes would bring him more trade.

But in the mean time, Bruce Turner had learned of the forgery through his banker, and the act had aroused all his vindictiveness. He would not submit to a thing which had been forced on him in that manner—not he. He had determined to make Crane suffer the full penalty of the law.

When Bruce arrived at home, after learning of the forgery, Uncle Dan was at the barn, and called out to him, but he did not answer. Uncle Dan then went to assist in removing the horse from the shafts, and saw clearly by the flash of Bruce's eye, and by the deepened color in his sunburnt cheeks, that something was wrong.

Bruce jerked the harness from the animal's back, and switched it into its place in the buggy-house. Then he went to the house, leaving Uncle Dan to dispose of Venus.

Under ordinary circumstances, Uncle Dan would have known what Bruce wanted done with the horse. But now he did not know, and did not dare ask.

"Come on, Venus, I'll feed you," he said, at length. "I reckon that won't go fur amiss—with you anyhow." He chuckled as he led her to the barn.

After feeding the horse, Uncle Dan walked to the edge of the barn-shed, and stood, wondering what he should do with the buggy. He looked toward the house, but he received no sign. He gazed into the sky. Yes; there a gathering cloud warned him to run the buggy under shelter.

Uncle Dan did not see Bruce again until the supper hour called them together.

They ate for a short time without exchange of words. Finally, Bruce said:

"You know Crane went to Cincinnati?" He then told of the offense, placing his own construction upon it.

Uncle Dan left his buttered griddle cake to grow cold and stiff, and discussed the subject with Bruce. At length he said:

"I don't believe he ever meant to misuse you, more then the act 'ud be a ill treatment of any man. I don't believe he did! You know he never made nothin' of any consequence, an' he's got a wife what likes to put on as many airs as any the balance. I think he was jes' sorter driv to it, myse'f. A wife of that sort is a pow'ful expensive article. Pow'ful expensive!"

"You think that's sufficient excuse for him, do you?" Bruce snapped.

"Now, Bruce, boy, you know I don't think no sech a thing. He ort not to 'a' done it, o' course, but the feller's human. He's a kind-hearted, accommodatin' soul. I b'lieve it's jes' as I sez. I b'lieve it's the woman mostly. I ain't one neither what thinks ever' time a man fails it's the woman's fault."

"Woman or no woman, he will pay for it."

"Bruce, boy, that will never do—under the circumstances. Think of—think of—Miss Milly."

"Yes; that's what makes me so mad," said Bruce. "He thinks I won't expose him on that account. He thinks he has me right there."

"Don't do what you threaten; think of what it might lead to. Some day you mought find yerse'f a ole bachelor like me, an' mebbe there wouldn't be no good feller round to take keer o' you like you do me. Besides, you kin afford to marry. Fer them what kin afford it, it's all right, I think. There's too many fellers though what marry before they kin take keer of a wife. It's astin' too much of a woman to want her to live on jes' air an' love an' water; let alone raise chillun that away. An' fer them what can't afford it, luck depends a sight on the kind o' woman a feller gits, an' it's pow'ful risky. As fer Crane's wife, I knowed her when she was a girl, an' she was as likely as any the girls. But you know her paw was able to buy her all the bonnets an' fixin's that most women-folks set sech store by, an' she was content, an' didn't 'pear to keer over much 'bout 'em then. Now she's not able to have 'em, an' she knows it. So she thinks she's lettin' of herse'f down not to have 'em jes' the same as ever, an' she wants 'em pow'ful bad. An' she don't act the pootiest in the world when she don't git 'em, is my notion."

"You think, then, it would be safer for a man to marry a girl who never had any money to spend, do you?"

"Naw, I don't—not as a rule." And Uncle Dan fell to carving his griddle cake. "Most women seem to think finery o' one sort or a-nother is their lawful inheritance from the world at some time. Ef they can't git the things before they marry,

they air pow'ful apt to think they orter come after'ards."

"Well, if a man should marry a widow, he would know what to depend on then, you think?"

"Not ever' time. Sallie Jane Jones she married a triflin' rascal the first time. He got drunk, an' ever' time he went home in that condition, he 'ud beat her. She stood it as meek as a lamb. People said she never had the spunk what she orter 'a' had. But by an' by he died in one of his drunken brawls, an' in due time Sallie Jane married Jim Hardy. Where she got her courage from to try it ag'in is mor'n I kin tell you, but there ain't no accountin' fer women, some women. Folks felt relieved fer her when she was through with the first one. But Jim was a decent, hard-workin' chap. I ain't got nothin' to say agin him unless 'tis *he* never showed 'nough spunk. The week after they got married Sallie Jane went an' bought a new buggy whip an' stood it in the corner o' the room. That night she waited fer him to git to sleep, then she took an' sewed him up in the sheet an' let him have the buggy whip fer all it was worth. When he ast her what was the matter, she tole him that the nex' time she said the cows orter be kept in the barn instid o' bein' turned out in the pastur', it had to be did. Well, sir, she bossed Jim the way you never heerd o' a woman bossin' a man before. Jim was feered to go to sleep o' nights ef he hadn't done her way 'bout things. Then to cap it all, while she laid on her bed a-dyin', an' Jim a-cryin', she ast to be buried

at the feet of her first husband. Ever since I heerd 'bout that, I've been shy o' widders."

Uncle Dan was endeavoring to put Bruce in a more desirable frame of mind, and so he continued:

"You never heerd how clost I come to gittin' married, did you? I know you never heerd jes' why I never got married, fer yer Uncle Dan ain't never tole that before.

"Well, Mrs. Lewis, she is now, was Polly Atchison then," he began. "Polly's father was a very good small farmer in them days, but he was clost with his money. He thought it was a pow'ful waste fer a girl to have more'n three dresses at a time; one dress fer Sunday, an' a change fer ever' day. An' a hat orter las' two year anyway. I thought 'bout all that, fer I was a reflectin' chap. It 'peared sensible to me, specially when Polly was as pooty as a pink, an' outshined t'other girls in spite of her ole clo'es. So when she promised to be my wife, I thought it was a great snap fer Natur' to help out a feller so much. I b'lieved I could afford to buy a bonnet ever' two year when crops was good. Polly was sensible, I thought, an' wouldn't want it, o' course, when the crop was short. I meant to take pains to tell her how well she looked in her ole one the times the crops failed, ef they should fail. I hoped though they wouldn't."

"For you expected to give her more than just air and love and water, didn't you?" said Bruce.

"Now, boy! Anyhow, I had things all fixed to my satisfaction when a way-off cousin from Phila-

delphy come to pay 'em a visit. She was some older then Polly was. A likely gal, I reckon they thought up in Philadelphia, from the way she th'owed back her shoulders when she walked, an' them skirts she wore what stood out round her an' made her look as big as a hogshead.

"When she first come, she talked 'bout the delightful quietude of the country, but in a few weeks the delightful quietude got to be more delightful then she could stan'. She never said it was that what made her so pow'ful anxious to git back to Philadelphia. I knowed though she was tired of the country, but I seen she was goin' to sham it out that she wasn't. I knowed too ef she was as big as them hogshead skirts made her look to be, an' she was like other girls, she 'ud be doin' on half rations to cut down her size. I set it down after'ards that she was a sham all round; fer she 'peared to think our ways was all right, but at the same time, Polly commenced to call me Mr. Richardson. I knowed she put her up to it, fer Polly had always said Dan before.

"One evenin' I took Polly to meetin'. The cousin had a headache, she said, an' couldn't go. I never suggested mebbe her head might git better ef she 'ud ride out. I ast Polly what made her so formal with me. She never answered me direct, but the tears come in her eyes, an' I couldn't find no more fault with her then. By an' by, she sez 'Dan,' an' I thought it sounded the sweetest it ever had. 'Dan,' she sez, 'I wisht paw 'ud lemme git more things then he does. When we git married you will, won't you?' I cleared up my throat

two or three times, an' tole her she looked 'nough pootier to me then her Philadelphy cousin did with all her finery. An' I wisht then with all my might that that gal had a stayed in Philadelphy.

" 'But you will, won't you, Dan?' she plead, with the tears still a standin' in her pooty blue eyes.

" 'I'll do ever'thing I kin fer you, Polly,' I sez.

" 'You will buy me lots o' pooty things then, won't you, Dan?'

"Well, now, shucks! all my calc'latin' was knocked in the head.

"She persuaded her paw to let her go home with her cousin. I never knowed how, but she an' her cousin jined heads. An' when two women jine heads agin a man, he's bound to give in.

"When Polly come back she had some o' them hogshead lookin' dresses. The first time I went to see her she ast me to call her Mary. Mary sounded more stylish, she said.

" 'I like Polly the best,' I tole her.

" 'Well, I'll call you Daniel ef you will,' she sez.

" 'Now, Polly,' I sez, fer I was that determined to stick to the Polly, 'I 'ud feel like I was dressed up in the parson's clo'es ef you wus to, an' I never could grow big 'nough to fill 'em out. Anyhow, I ain't never been up to Philadelphy, you know.'

" 'Well, mebbe when we git married, we kin go to Philadelphy, an' you kin pick up some then.'

" 'Now, Polly,' I sez, 'let's reason 'bout this. I'm jes' Dan, an' you can't mek Daniel out o' me. Ef you air willin' to be Polly agin, ef you kin drop back to it, we'll hitch, but ef you haf to be Mary, it'll be best fer both of us fer us never to marry.'

“‘I don’t see why you can’t be Daniel,’ she sez. ‘I’ve got so uster Mary of late that it sorter gives me a cold chill to be called Polly.’”

“‘Well,’ I sez, ‘you’ll always be Polly to me, cold chills, or no cold chills.’”

“But I never went back after that night. I knowed it wouldn’t do, fer my calc’lations wasn’t big ’nough to take keer of a Mary. I seen the bridge was down in time to stop the engine from tumbling into the crick.

“Now, Crane is a near-sighted feller ’bout some things. He always was. When he comes out o’ this scrape, I hope he will put on his fur-seein’ specs fer the balance of the trip.”

“Perhaps he will when I’m through with him,” said Bruce. But there was less warmth in his manner than he had shown hitherto.

“Bruce, boy, you lemme manage this fer you?”

“You?” said Bruce, with a show of contempt for Uncle Dan’s business methods.

“I know I’m not what you ’ud call a good manager, ginerally speakin’. I want to undertake this, though, an’ ef I don’t do it satisfactory, I’ll not interfere with you agin.”

“What are you going to do?”

“You jes’ leave that with me, an’ you stay here at home an’ work fer the nex’ few days.”

Aunt Jane came in to carry out the dishes, and the men rose from the table.

Early on the following morning Uncle Dan stopped to see Captain Morgan on his way to transact the business.

"Won't you 'light and come in?" called the captain, as he walked toward the stile.

"I ain't got time this mornin'. I jes' want to see you a minute."

"What's your hurry? We had a good rain last night, didn't we? The crops needed it too; at least I thought so."

"Yes; but I ain't got crops on the brain this mornin', Captain." Uncle Dan then related what he knew of the forgery. Afterwards he said:

"I can't reason with Bruce when he's all fired up like he is 'bout this. What do you think orter be done?"

Captain Morgan revolved the problem in his mind, and then said slowly:

"I believe it's best ordinarily for the law to take its course. Yet it seems to me this case needs different treatment. I can tell you what I would do if I could. If I had the money to spare, I would turn it over to Alvin, and give the fellow that kind of chance to make a man of himself yet. As I said, I know that way wouldn't be best in every case, but I would do it this time sure." Captain Morgan groaned in thinking of his lost property, but he reflected that when he had it he did not look at the moral side of a question as he now saw it.

"Well, I've got the money. I haven't got much more, it's true; but there ain't no other way what I know of that it 'll do Bruce more good. So I'll jes' do as you say."

"I almost envy you your ability to do the good deed, Uncle Dan!"

"Ahem! Captain, don't go to pokin' none o' yer religion at me. I ain't after that. I jes' want to keep Bruce from gittin' ship-wrecked, that's all."

"I believe it's the very thing, Uncle Dan. God bless you!"

Uncle Dan struck his horse. Then he turned toward the stile again, and said:

"Captain, do you think some o' that 'ud be good fer Crane too?"

"I do; yes."

"Saddle yer horse, an' come along."

"Why not you do it?" For a moment the captain wished that some one else would perform the duty which was distinctly his, for there was no other to do it.

"That's out o' my line, Captain. I ain't up to it."

A few minutes later the two men rode along together. And Captain Morgan thought:

"What a considerate banker Up Yonder to put to our credit just a few words of cheer. It's about all that I have to give anybody now."

CHAPTER VIII

Helen rose at four o'clock on Tuesday morning, an hour earlier than was her habit. For of all the busy days in the year, this one was the busiest—it was the day for wheat-thrashing.

Captain Morgan was already out. He was hauling coal to the wheat yard, and completing other arrangements before the arrival of the machine, which was expected soon after breakfast.

As Helen crossed and recrossed the back porch in performance of her duties, the beautiful coloring on the eastern horizon, the bedecked way for the oncoming sun, attracted her attention. Then her attitude of admiration yielded to her haste to get breakfast over and out of the way.

When the sun had begun to pour through the limbs of the symmetrical red-oak tree in range of the back porch, Helen looked again and saw negro Mime coming through the pasture to be installed as helper for the day. For in spite of the preparations which had been made on the previous day, the duties were too many and too arduous for the discharge of one pair of hands.

Mrs. Morgan accepted no more attentions that morning than her family urged upon her. She regarded her work-basket as the one indispensable article.

The wheat sack had been removed, and several small pieces of cloth and a few spools of thread had been put into the basket.

She listened a while to the bustle in the adjoin-

ing room, accompanying the preparations for dinner. Then she unfolded the piece of cloth, and examined the spools, loosening the end of the thread of each, thinking:

"How Helen needs me! The child does not say a word. If she would bear it less silently, I think I could endure the yearning in her eyes better."

Then she refastened the ends, refolded each article, replaced them in the basket, and hugged the basket fiercely, thinking:

"I know she wants me to take hold and do. But I can't! How can I?" She hugged the basket again. "What a mother, though, it must seem to lie back here and throw the responsibility of this day on her young shoulders."

She took out the articles again, examined each piece of cloth and each spool of thread. Again she returned all to the basket, and repeated the embrace, thinking:

"Father wants me to take hold too. He does! I know he does! How dreadful it is to feel that things are expected of me and I am not able to do them."

Neither Captain Morgan nor Helen desired Mrs. Morgan to exert herself beyond her strength, and they had not consciously intimated by either word or manner that they did. Her view of the situation perhaps was due somewhat to morbidness, but largely to lack of spiritual strength.

She raised herself on her elbow, and then dropped back to her pillow. Her mind reverted to her childhood's home. There she perceived

the wish of no one that she exert herself. She imagined her mother bending over her, and her mother's sweet smile beaming upon her. She pushed her basket from her, folded her arms, and lay long in quiet enjoyment.

At length she opened her eyes, and discontent filled her. She stretched forth her arms as if to grasp that peace which she had found, but it was gone. Then she lay gazing at the several crevices in the ceiling, already knowing the exact curve of each tiny part. After a while she turned her body and stared at the open door-way of the hall.

The cat came in presently, jumped upon the foot of the bed, and curled up for a nap.

"Mother, want anything?" asked Helen, thrusting in her head at the hall door.

"No, child, no; how are you gettin' on?"

"All right," Helen called, as she hurried back to the kitchen.

"My throat is dry," Mrs. Morgan thought. "I haven't had any water since early this mornin'. When they are busy all I can do is to want nothing. I wish I was dead!" And she reached out, picked up her work-basket, and pressed it to her side. "O Heaven, pity! The physical suffering is bad enough, but this is a thousand times worse."

"Mother, I thought I would bring you your dinner first," said Helen, reentering the room, carrying a tray. "Dinner is about ready to put on the table. The men will be here directly, I reckon; it's most time. How have you got along to-day?"

"All right. What made you bother about me? I don't need much, and I can wait."

Helen partly understood the meaning of the scattered pieces of cloth. As she returned them to the basket, she remarked:

"Betsy has been keeping you company, has she?" And she threw Betsy to the floor in acknowledgment to herself of Betsy's failure to alleviate her mother's suffering.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Morgan, out of a desire to conceal her disturbance. "Just set the basket up here by my pillow," she said, as she ate of the mashed potato.

Helen rolled down her sleeves, and tied on a clean apron. Upon leaving the room, she told her mother to knock on the floor with the stick that was near if she should want anything else.

The wheat-field in which stood the thrashing machine was enclosed by a rail fence. A larger entrance to the field for the day's use was made by removing two or three panels of the fence. On the left of this opening a weather-beaten sled supported a barrel of ice water. A small locust tree in the fence corner furnished for the barrel a scanty shade. At the termination of two panels, a poison-ivy wound in and out. A broad level space showed on the top rail near the locust. The laborers came to drink at the water barrel, but none of them discovered the comfortable seat that the place afforded. Two or three climbed up and seated themselves on the sharp edge of a neighboring rail as they waited their turns to unload a wagon. At different times, knots of three or four

collected about the sled, some sitting upon it, and others propping themselves against the barrel.

The thrashing was well under way. Uncle Dan came, and walked around the machine. He watched the engineering, the feeding of the thrasher, the stacking of the straw, the sacking of the thrashed grain, and further fatigued himself by leaning against the stack of wheat sacks. Then the seat received an occupant.

"How come you to see that?" asked Mr. Pearce, a respected man of the neighborhood. He mopped his brow with his red bandanna handkerchief, and drained the pint tin cup. "It's hot to-day, Uncle Dan; it's enough to make all of us feel like settin' in the shade."

"But don't none the rest of us know how to look fer the right sort of seats, at least don't none of us find 'em?"

The man who last spoke tied his handkerchief around his neck, and then picked up a tin cup.

"This was here before I come," said Uncle Dan, as he shifted himself about and leaned against the tree. "All o' you was here before I was, too."

"That's so," said the engineer, leering at the crowd with his deep-set eyes. "But we haven't none of us had time to look fer the best places." His soot-marked face broke into a scowl which he intended for a smile.

"And he ain't had time to do nothin' else," remarked Mr. Pearce.

"They are hard on you to-day," said Bob Clain. "They just envy you, that's all. Stick to your seat, Uncle Dan. I'm comin'," he called to the

driver on his wagon. Then he went off with rapid strides, overtaking the wagon, and jumping on it as it rolled away to the next field to load up with more wheat.

"I'm us'ter that," replied Uncle Dan, for the benefit of the men remaining.

"I reckon you think if you have a good place, it don't matter much if them in the field do point at you and say they orter knowed that it took you to find it," remarked Mr. Jones, another neighbor. And he nodded meaningly at Bruce Turner, who was coming toward the water barrel.

The crowd joined in a knowing laugh, from which Uncle Dan refrained at first. Then he laughed as heartily as any one, thinking:

"Ef a feller is lucky he has the right to git as much fun out of it as any o' the balance."

"It's hot on that straw stack," Bruce said. "Jerry gave out, and so I told him to get on the wagon, and I would take his place. I didn't have a sponge to put over my nose; and I'm most choked with the dust." He reached into the barrel, and dipped up a cup of the iced water.

Across the adjoining field came three figures: one, that of a half-grown negro girl; one, that of a little barefoot boy who was picking his way cautiously over the sharp ends of the wheat straw; the other, that of a still smaller girl. Finally the attendant yielded to the pleadings of the little one and carried her.

When near the thrashing-machine, little Annie was content to sit down by the straw-stack, as she was bidden, and watch the yellow grains pour into

the half-bushel measures. Not so with Joel; he desired to investigate the operations. So he went to the sackers and made numerous inquiries. He caught his hands full of the falling grains, chocked his mouth, and then ran away with some for little Annie.

"Stay here, Joel," called the negro girl. But Joel either did not hear, or affected not to hear, and bounced off again to the side of Captain Morgan, who was assisting in sacking the wheat.

"I want to help," Joel said.

"You are too little yet," said the captain; "you can't lift the measure. Run along."

"I can do another way, though." And he jerked off his hat and held it, getting it full of wheat.

Bill Graham looked astonishment at Captain Morgan, and Captain Morgan looked back at Bill and acknowledged defeat.

"Here 'tis," said Joel, presenting his hat at the mouth of the sack.

"Much obliged to you, son," said the captain, taking the offered wheat; "but that will be enough now."

"Why, your sack ain't full." But as Joel was about to fill his hat the second time, Pearly confronted him with inflexible commands:

"You come here, or I'll tell your ma, and she won't let you come back any more. Come on." Then she took his hand and led him to the water barrel. This she decided was a safer place for him and a pleasanter one for herself.

"Howdy, chillun," called out Uncle Dan, as they drew near. "Did you come to help us?"

"They wouldn't let me," answered Joel.

"I didn't want to," said little Annie.

"But she would eat all the wheat I'd pack her."

"No, I didn't; it was so hard I couldn't chew it much."

"Here's somethin' you kin chaw better," said Uncle Dan, producing a caramel from his pocket, and then lowering himself slowly to the ground.

Little Annie accepted the candy and smiled.

"How did you know we was comin'?" asked Joel, stepping up expectantly.

"I knowed we couldn't git along without you," replied Uncle Dan, fumbling in his pocket for another caramel.

"Thank you, sir," said Joel. "What did you say, Annie?"

"Thank you, sir," repeated the baby.

"But I b'lieve that's not enough from little Annie. I think I want a kiss." He took the child in his arms.

"Well," the baby said, and touched Uncle Dan's lips lightly. Then she scoured across her mouth with her sleeve.

"She don't like your mustache," said Joel, in explanation of little Annie's behavior. "I wouldn't either; it's mushy." And he turned and sped to the next fence corner on his hands and knees.

"Uncle Dan," called Joel from his nook when he had finished his candy, "if you had enough caramels to sack, you 'ud let me help you, wouldn't you?"

The crowd laughed, and Uncle Dan said:

"I would that, Joel! I ain't got 'nough fer that, but here's a few more."

"Thank you, sir. Is this all you've got? If 'tis, I'll give Annie some."

"You eat them. I'll take keer o' her."

"Is wheat-thrashin' as big as you thought it would be?" asked Mr. Pearce, who came for another drink of water.

"Yes, sir; I reckon so," answered Joel; "but I haven't seen the dinner yet."

"Now you're talkin'," said some one. "I'm beginnin' to feel like I would like mighty well to see it myself. I reckon we will directly; they're 'bout through. They wanted to finish before they stopped."

"Is the engine as big as you thought it would be?" asked Mr. Pearce, still directing his conversation to Joel.

"I knowed; I had seen it before."

"I can remember when I was about his size and a little older," said Mr. Pearce, turning to the crowd, "that I thought wheat-thrashin' was the biggest thing in the whole year except Christmas."

"Neither of them is like it used to be, is it?" said Bruce Turner, whose chord of youthful memories had been struck.

"It don't take so many years, after all, to get to that place, does it?" answered Mr. Pearce, looking at Bruce. "Bein' in the thick of the fight is different from lookin' on through a mist at a distance."

The whistle on the engine blew. So the men

unhitched the horses from the wagons and went toward the house, some riding and some walking.

Uncle Dan lifted little Annie to his shoulder, and strode off with the others.

"I wants to ride," pleaded the child.

"I do too," said Joel to Uncle Dan.

"But I haven't got no horse."

"Come with me," said Mr. Pearce, stretching forth his arms to little Annie.

"I don't want to; I wants to ride with Uncle Dan."

"I do too," chimed in Joel.

"Take that horse yonder," said Captain Morgan, coming up and seeing Uncle Dan's predicament.

"Annie, are you goin' to ride behind?" asked Joel.

"I'm goin' to ride in front," she replied.

"Well, I want to, too," said Joel. "What are we goin' to do?"

"I'm goin' to ride in front," persisted she.

"Yes, you better, I reckon; you might fall off behind."

"You come and go with me," said Bruce Turner.

"I want to go with Uncle Dan, but I want to ride in front."

"I'll let you ride in front," said Bruce.

"But you are not Uncle Dan."

"Now here, chillun, I can't take both o' you in front. Ef I was some folks I might try it, but I know I can't do it without lettin' one or t'other fall."

"I reckon I 'll have to go with Mr. Bruce, then," said Joel. "Mamma said she 'spected he would be my uncle anyway some day. I wish Aunt Milly would marry Uncle Dan, though."

"Come on, Joel," said Bruce, blushing to the roots of his hair, while Uncle Dan and Captain Morgan laughed.

"Who came with you?" asked Bruce, as he rode along.

"Just mamma; Aunt Milly went on to her home."

"I have felt a little prejudiced against the child on his father's account," thought Bruce. "It's small of me, too. I won't be so mean." He ran his hand into his pocket, took out a fifty-cent piece, and offered it to the boy. "Take it and buy you some candy," he said.

Joel eyed the money with interest, and then said:

"I would like to have the candy. Papa told me, though, a long time ago, that I must never take any money that I hadn't worked for; and I haven't worked for that."

"But when anybody gives you some as a present, it's different."

"He didn't say 'bout that. He just said not take any I hadn't worked for, and I'm afraid it wouldn't be right."

"You are a mighty good little fellow," said Bruce, as he put the money back into his pocket. He thought that the child had produced a stronger argument in the father's favor than half a dozen lawyers could have done.

"No; I'm not good much. I'm just a little boy. When I get big like papa, then I'll be good like him. I'm 'bliged to you though for wantin' to give it to me. I know you meant to be good, but you didn't know."

And Bruce reflected upon his experience with the father:

"Did I mean to be good when I didn't know? No; I meant to be mean when I thought I did know."

Helen sent Mime to the fence to see if the men were in sight. She was anxious for them to come before the dinner should spoil.

"Yes'm, they is comin'," Mime called. Then she returned to the porch. There Nina Crane waited with Helen.

"I didn't intend to be so late," Nina said; "but I could not get off any sooner, it seemed."

"It's good of you to come at all," said Helen.

"I thought you would need some extra help about the table. There are always so many men, and they all want to be waited on at once, it looks like."

Soon the men streamed in from the barn. They poured water into the shining tin wash-pans out of the buckets which had been filled for that purpose, washed their faces and hands, and combed their heads.

Helen had lengthened the usual dining table with two small tables and a large box.

Captain Morgan seated himself at one end of the table, and Uncle Dan sat down at the other end.

After grace, Helen, Nina, and Mime hurried around with the dishes.

Captain Morgan exchanged remarks with his neighbors on each side. Uncle Dan talked; he always had something to say to Helen and Nina when either passed anything to him.

"A fine dinner, Miss Helen," he said once; "the best one we've had yit."

"And he ought to know," spoke up Mr. Pearce, "for he goes to 'em all."

"I do know," said Uncle Dan, laughing. "I'm a good jedge."

"Have butter, Uncle Dan?" said Nina, following Helen.

"Ef you please." And, as he reached up to lay hold of the butter knife, Helen accidentally jostled Nina, causing the plate to fall bottom upwards on Uncle Dan's coat sleeve.

"Miss Nina, I didn't 'spose you 'ud think I was greedy 'nough to want it ever' bit, ef I do take in all the dinners."

Nina and Helen both made apologies, and wiped off the butter the best they could.

Joel and little Annie stood in the hall door, watching while the men ate. Upon seeing that Uncle Dan was in trouble, Joel said:

"If you'll put some soap on it and rub it hard, it'll come out. I wouldn't cry 'bout that."

Little Annie went near, and whispered:

"I hopes it's not your Sunday coat."

When the men left for the field, Uncle Dan said that he had had thrashing enough for one day. So

he decided to go in and talk a while to Mrs. Morgan.

On his way to the room, he stopped near the table, where Helen, Nina, and the children sat eating, and remarked:

"Miss Helen, I say agin you had the finest dinner, the best cooked dinner we've had yit."

"Uncle Dan, you are very kind, but I know I'm nothing to brag on as a cook."

"How air you to-day?" Uncle Dan asked, entering the room unceremoniously. "Why, I thought mebbe you 'ud be up to-day."

"She has been setting up in bed a while," said the captain. "She has just laid down again; she seems to be a little weak to-day. I think she'll feel stronger after she rests a while."

"How do you do, Uncle Dan?" Mrs. Morgan said, at length, opening her eyes.

"Ef you jes' knowed how well Miss Helen managed the dinner, you wouldn't want to set foot in the kitchen as long as she stays with you. Ef I wasn't gittin' so ole, an' a losin' of my good looks 'long with it, I 'ud take her away myse'f."

Mrs. Morgan twisted the corner of the counterpane, saying:

"It's been a right hard day on Helen." Then asked, "How many men, father?"

"Twenty-seven in all."

"Jes' twenty-six what count," said Uncle Dan. "I don't count nowheres but at the table." Then he turned to Captain Morgan, and remarked, "I b'lieve they air goin' to Mr. Pearce's nex'."

"Yes," said the captain, fanning away a fly from Mrs. Morgan's face.

"You goin'?"

"I'll stay here this evenin'," Captain Morgan replied, still looking at his wife.

"No you won't, father. I know you ought to be lookin' after the haulin' of the wheat or some-thin' else." Then she thought: "How much easier it is to suffer, just to suffer, than it is to have him waiting on me when all the time he's thinkin' of things outside that he ought to be doin'. It's so hard! Oh, so hard!"

Later, when Helen came in to beat up the pillows and make the bed more comfortable for the night, Mrs. Morgan pushed the work-basket toward her, saying:

"It's been a busy day, and a hard one, child. I hope you will have a chance to rest some to-morrow."

CHAPTER IX

On the Thursday afternoon following the wheat-thrashing at Captain Morgan's, Uncle Dan left home for Meadowville. Seeing Captain Morgan and Helen in their garden as he went along, he rode up to the fence and called out:

"Good evenin', Captain. Good evenin', Miss Helen. It looks like there's plenty o' beans fer Miss Helen to pick without no more hoein', Captain."

"I'm not hoein' the beans, though," said the captain, going toward the fence, carrying his hoe.

"I see; but you must have hoed 'em considerable from the quantity there is on the vines. When Miss Helen goes to pick 'em, I know she thinks you've overdone the job. So don't make it hard on her with the other veg'tables. Ef you hadn't give us all so much t'other day, Bruce would 'a' been better off, I expect."

"Why, he sick?" asked the captain, catching hold of a paling with his disengaged hand.

"He was pooty sick Tuesday night an' yestiddy. He's up though to-day."

"Who's sick?" asked Helen, leaving her pan of beans and going to the fence.

"Bruce. He got too much o' yer good dinner."

"I'm sorry," said she, in real sympathy. Then added in a spirit of mischief, "It couldn't have been the dinner, you know; for it was well cooked—you told me so."

"It wasn't the cookin'."

"It couldn't have been," she spoke positively, and then laughed.

"Bruce, he got so warm over there on the haystack; you remember he did, Captain?"

"Yes, I know," assented the captain.

"Then he drunk so much ice water. Captain here he had hoed his garden so much an' made veg'tables so plentiful, an' you had cooked 'em so temptin' that a feller could not help eatin' 'em. So altogether Bruce he got sick. You see, Helen, how good things kin be put to bad use sometimes. But yer paw kin tell you more about sech as that then I kin, fer I ain't much o' a han' at it myse'f; besides, I must be goin' on fer that medicine."

"I hope Bruce will soon be well," said the captain, as Uncle Dan rode away. He then turned and resumed his hoeing.

"I hope you will be sparing with your compliments next time, Mr. Richardson, unless they are deserved," called Helen.

"Now, Miss Helen," said Uncle Dan, stopping, "air you goin' to be like all the balance o' the women? Air you goin' to have yer own way in spite o' me tellin' you that it wasn't the cookin' what done it?"

"I know I don't know how to do it the way it should be done," Helen spoke out loud, as she walked between the rows of beans to her pan. "I hate it so, too, that I wouldn't want to learn if I had a chance."

Captain Morgan caught a few words, and so he watched his daughter as she stared off abstractedly

between the handfuls of beans which she plucked and dropped into the pan.

"What is the matter?" he asked, hoeing near Helen, and stopping. "Tell me, can't you?"

"Don't ask me, father," she said, picking the beans more rapidly.

"I'm afraid I haven't done my duty by you, child," he said. As he stood, looking at her, he thought: "I have desired the best for her. I know that; that is, I've wanted what I thought was the best. But I see now how it's been. I've regretted over and over being unable to give her the good things of this world, but it's never occurred to me before that I have never helped her lay up anything for the other world." He drove his hoe into the loamy soil. "Neglect of my daughter's best interest," he thought. He drew out the hoe, and drove it in again. Then he let the handle fall to the ground, stepped over a row of beans, and said:

"Daughter, I humbly apologize to you for my neglect of duty to you."

"O father, don't!" she protested. "Why, don't I know you can't help it? I don't blame you."

"But I blame myself. I ought to have helped you long ago."

"O father, you could not prevent our misfortunes!"

"But I have never helped you to make the best use of the misfortunes. I blame myself for that."

Helen looked up, and said:

"There is no need for you to blame yourself.

If our troubles had not come I could go on with my drawing."

"You still desire that, do you?"

"Almost as much as life itself, it seems to me."

After thinking for a short time, the captain said: "Well, it may be that the Lord intends for you to do that kind of work."

"How can you think so now? But, father, I never meant to bother you with this."

"I know you didn't. But I understand now a good many things that I've attributed to other causes." He thought of Helen's manner on several occasions. "You should have told me. No, I was the one. I should have taken greater pains to find out."

"Father, don't," she pleaded. "Let's not talk any more about it." And she rose to go.

"Wait, daughter," he said, motioning to her to put down the pan. "Have you ever asked God about this?"

"Why, no, sir." She stooped, and picked up a tiny clod of earth and crumbled it. "But, father, I'm perfectly willing to stay here at home. I could not think of doing anything else now. I'm willing to do my duty—try to do it."

"But if you don't develop the talent which God has given you, I'm afraid you won't be doing your whole duty."

"Father!" And she looked up at him through tears.

"You haven't asked Him to direct you as He sees best toward developing your talent."

"I don't understand how it can be done."

"I don't either, child; but you ought to ask God about it." Then he dropped to his knees on the bean vines, crushing them to the earth, and prayed:

"O God! forgive my neglect, and help daughter. Help her to do in this world whatsoever Thou wouldst have her do. Lead her into the way wherein Thou wouldst have her serve Thee, wherein she can produce the most abundant harvest for eternity. Use my life to that end as Thou seest fit. Thou knowest it all. O Father, help."

Then he rose and straightened the vines. "Daughter, God is faithful," he said. "He will do His part; now you must do yours. Ask Him to open a way for you, and if He thinks best, He will."

"Will He?" she asked, simply.

"Did you never hear of God's opening a way for anybody?"

"I have heard something of the kind from the pulpit."

"But you did not realize that He could help you, did you?"

"But, father, no one knows how I've suffered," she confided.

"You have been sick and didn't call in the Physician."

"I have been sick, if that's what you call it."

"This desire has harrowed the ground for the seed. Now let me tell you, child: It will be well for you to measure your capabilities the best you can. You are old enough to mark out a plan of life. Do this, and then never swerve from your plan, except as you alter it to accord with your

fuller understanding, or to readjust it to God's will. I mean have some plan, an object in view; don't live aimlessly. Admit honors and pleasures into this great scheme as mere incidentals. When they come in that way, and they do sometimes, they are all well and good. Regard them then as an extra amount to be turned to account. Often they do not come, even though you should be doing your best. Then be consoled that they await you in another world. Whether your capacity warrants the making of your plan on a large scale or a small one, if your motive be to win your Master's approval, the smallest plan will bring great results."

"I should make the most of life, then, for His sake, should I? If I were as good as you are I might." Her face showed marks of distress.

"I make out very bad, I'm afraid. It's a hammering of self all along the way. But, then, when I aim at the right, I think I can't fail utterly. It's the only way to lay up any treasures in Heaven."

Helen took up her pan. "Father," she said, "I'm grateful to you for this talk." Then she went to the house, and put away the beans for the next day's use.

Captain Morgan hung his hoe on the fence, and stepped in to speak to Mrs. Morgan before commencing the evening chores.

When he entered the room she lay watching the round face of the small metal clock on the mantelshelf.

"You are all right, are you?" he asked, going near her. As the expression fell upon his ears, it

conveyed to his mind a deeper meaning than the one which the question implied. And his own thoughts gave back the answer.

"What! am I to question Fanny's spiritual welfare?"

His wife had been the barometer from which he had gaged his temperature, according to the rise and fall of the mercury of her feelings.

"Fanny's needs are simply physical ones," he persuaded himself. "It's not so bad as it might be." And he smiled down upon her.

"If you had to lay here day in and day out, you wouldn't smile, I'm sure," said Mrs. Morgan.

He thought of his aversion to remaining long in the house at any time, and said:

"That's right. I'm afraid I wouldn't. The Lord can work wonderful changes though. If you didn't know his love and sympathy, it would be much harder for you, wouldn't it?"

"That's all well enough for you to talk when you are able to go about, but you don't know how bad it is to stay here nearly all the time." She looked in the direction of her work-basket, for which she had not asked since wheat-thrashing day.

Her husband followed her eyes, and then remarked:

"I'm so glad we are through thrashing wheat."

"Yes; I always feel as if we 'ud have a rest after that," she said.

Captain Morgan went on then to feed the stock. While the hogs were eating their corn, he stood by the fence near them and thought on his recent

conception of his duty to his family. "God have mercy on me and on them," he said, as he turned to go.

Helen pondered her father's words, and did as he advised. When she lay down to sleep that night she dreamed that she wore a covering over her face; that it was crossed at the back of her head, and that she held the ends in her hands. She struggled to see, asking one and another to remove it, but none could help her until she yielded her clasp. Then God stretched forth His hand and took off the cloth. She looked and beheld her image as in a mirror, seeing her talent as a power to be employed in God's service.

CHAPTER X

When Alvin Crane restored the money to Bruce Turner, he knew that Captain Morgan and Uncle Dan had prevailed upon the bank authorities not to prosecute him. And he hoped that his escape from prosecution would cause his offense to assume smaller proportions in the eyes of his wife when he should tell her. This disagreeable duty he postponed from time to time, but at length he determined to do it. Therefore one night he related the whole of his poor miserable story. He touched lightly the part which her influence had played, alluding to it only as her taste demanded such things as he could not afford to buy. He blamed himself for his misdoing, and expressed repentance for it.

"But people know about it," sobbed Nina.

"Yes; I reckon they do. Some do, anyhow."

"How in the world will I ever hold my own among them any more? It was hard enough before."

This view of the situation vexed Alvin, and so he went to bed without exchanging further words with his wife.

Nina lay awake a long while, grieving over the way in which the sin would affect her with the world. The next morning she did not rise.

Later in the day her father called. When she had told him of the circumstance, he said:

"But Alvin didn't have a very big trade." Not that Mr. Morgan approved of the action, but he

used the argument to assist in maintaining his composure.

"Father!" said Nina, surprised at his reasoning.

Mr. Morgan only groaned, and apparently increased the length of his long legs by stretching them toward the hearth-rug. Soon he got up and went home.

He hitched his horse at the stile, and stopped in the front yard where Camilla was digging around the geraniums. He took a package of mail from his coat pocket, looked through it, and handed his daughter two letters and a magazine. Then he asked where Mrs. Morgan was.

"In the cellar," answered Camilla, intent upon the postmark of a letter.

Mr. Morgan found his wife busily employed in labeling some jars of plum preserves. He went near her, and watched her movements in silence for a few minutes. Then he said:

"Alvin has been hard up lately."

"That's nothin' new," declared Mrs. Morgan; "he's always that, ain't he?" She pushed aside a jar.

"He's forged a check on Bruce Turner."

"Forged—check—on—Bruce—Turner!"

"But his trade has been small," said Mr. Cliff Morgan, recognizing the need of resorting to his former argument.

"Trade's been small? C. D.!"

Mr. Morgan turned to go up the steps.

"C. D., stop. Who told you?"

"Nina."

"Can they prosecute him?" asked Mrs. Cliff Morgan, to make sure that her vague knowledge of such matters was not leading her to wrong conclusions.

"They ain't goin' to do it."

"Well!" said she, as if she were relieved. Then in a crescendo voice, she declared:

"But what a disgrace! C. D., can't you do nothin'?" She depended upon his masculine handling of all affairs of significance. "What will poor Nina do? The disgrace of it—the disgrace."

Mr. Morgan continued his ascent of the steps, endeavoring to hold fast to the thought that circumstances had conspired against Alvin.

Mrs. Morgan finished putting away her preserves, and then went out of the cellar, and called Camilla.

But Camilla had resumed her work, and at first did not hear.

She had suspended her digging sufficiently long to read her letters and to turn rapidly the pages of her magazine. Then she had placed them in a heap beside her.

Digging around the flowers was not a labor of love with her. She went about the job, however, as she went about many other duties, conscious of her dislike for the work, and finished, as she often finished others, by trying to get some amusement from the task.

"What a beautiful show-window you make!" she thought on this occasion. "All for the benefit of my new hats, too. Some of you are plumes; some birds with long tails, the longer, the better."

And she laughed. "I wouldn't care if they were as long as that of a bird of paradise. Bird of paradise! That's the one, now isn't it?" She tried to laugh, but could not. "Others of you are shiny buckles," she continued, "and some are ribbons—great, heavy satin ribbons. For he says it must come off this fall, and that is not the season for flowers." She spaded up a bunch of grass. "I'll not have any green on my wedding-hats and be reminded of the country by it if I am to set up my new life in the woods." Then she turned her sunbonneted face toward the house, and called, "I'm coming!"

When she entered the dining-room, her mother met her with:

"You must eat your dinner and get ready quick. We must go to your sister this afternoon. Alvin has gone and forged a check. Poor child! she has had enough to try her."

"On whom did he forge the check," inquired Camilla.

"On Bruce Turner, your father said."

"On Bruce Turner? Well, then, I think you ought to stay at home and console me. For I'll never get to spend the money, and Nina already has it."

"Camilla Morgan!" And Mrs. Morgan waddled about the room, steaming with anger, and placed the butter on the table in a soup plate instead of the butter dish.

There had been other times lately when Camilla had seemed to overreach her mother by self-assertion.

As Mrs. Morgan and her daughter drove along together that afternoon, Camilla asked:

"What has Bruce done?"

Mrs. Morgan retold all that she knew about the forgery. Then Camilla seized the opportunity to present her views concerning matrimony in general and her own marriage in particular. It was a seasonable time for her to gain against her mother's frequently expressed opinions. She recognized her opportunity, and made the most of it. She even urged her mother into saying, "Yes, a girl 'd better live single always than endure disgrace like this." When they arrived at Nina's, the children met them at the stile, and Mrs. Morgan asked:

"How is your mamma?"

"She's all right, I reckon," replied Joel; "she's in the parlor."

Mrs. Morgan went to the house, and left Camilla to hitch the horse.

Nina looked up from her employment, surprised, for she did not see the buggy stop.

"What are you doin', child, shut up in this hot room?" asked Mrs. Morgan, opening the door wide.

"O mother! Father told you, did he?" Nina rose, and threw her arms about her mother. "It's awful, isn't it?"

"It's disgraceful!"

And the two women sat down and talked the matter over.

In compliance with the children's request, Camilla went to their playhouse. She was glad of

the excuse to absent herself from the society of her mother and sister for a while.

At length Nina said:

"I thought I would take up the carpet in here and get a hard-wood covering. They come already to tack down on the floor. They are so much used with rugs. Mrs. Casey has a beautiful one. What do you think about my having the wall re-papered with solid pink paper? Don't you think it would be pretty? I'll have to do something to hold my own."

Mrs. Morgan took off her hat and laid it on a chair. She drew off her driving-gloves, and rolled one glove over the other, and then fastened them in her hat with her hat-pin. Afterwards, she replied:

"It makes me so mad, I can't hardly talk. Here you are doin' your best to fix up a home for him, and have things nice like other people, and to think—" She got up and went into the sitting-room.

Nina followed, bursting forth afresh in tears and saying: "I don't see why some people have to have so much trouble, while others don't have any. Mrs. Casey is always as calm and sweet-tempered, and never seems to know there is such a thing as trouble in the world. But who couldn't be if they had her money to go on, and her pleasant surroundings? I could be, I know."

Mrs. Morgan sat in a rocking-chair, rocking, and interposing an occasional "Disgrace!" between series of jerks of her head.

After a short time, Nina lay down on the couch, complaining of headache.

"I don't wonder at it, child," said the mother. And she opened a medicine-chest in the corner, and took down the camphor bottle, which she gave to Nina. "I better take the children home with me."

"I wish you would, for I don't feel like worrying with them."

Mrs. Morgan went to the door, and called Camilla to bring in the children. She bundled up a few changes of clothing for them, and bade Camilla wipe their faces and hands.

"How thankful you ought to be that it's not you who has this to endure," said Nina, when her sister told her good-by.

Mrs. Morgan stooped and kissed Nina, and then left her to the comforts of her camphor bottle.

Soon after supper, Camilla went to her room. She placed the lamp on the table, and sat down to look over the magazine which she had received that morning. She opened it at an illustrated article entitled "Sights of New York." Among the pictures were portions of streets crowded with people.

She pored over the pictures, and read the article with absorbing interest. Then she rose and paced up and down the room. Once when she came near the dressing-case, she saw her letters of the morning lying upon it. She took them up, returned to her chair, and reread them.

In one was an invitation from a relative in Cincinnati to visit her. The other was from Bruce

Turner. He wished to call on the second evening following.

When Camilla finished reading Bruce's letter, she let it fall into her lap. Then she put her elbow on the table and her head in her hand, and tried to think.

The result was a determination to break her engagement of marriage. She would pretend either that she was afraid to marry since her sister had had trouble, or that she did not wish to embarrass Bruce by bringing him into a closer relationship with the man who had wronged him.

CHAPTER XI

"Come in!" called Bruce Turner, looking up from a photograph album. He saw two heads bobbing just outside of the open door.

"Well, if you think I'll do," answered Joel. And he went toward the sofa on which Bruce sat. "Gran'ma told me 'while ago that I wasn't clean 'nough for company, but I reckon I'm all right now."

Bruce beheld a shiny face, and hair which still dripped with water. The wet knees of the small trousers bore further evidence of Joel's desire to command a respectable appearance. The feet and legs, from haste, were left to the atmosphere to dry.

"You're all right. Sit down."

"Go back, Annie, you won't do," said Joel, turning to the other little figure which hesitated on the threshold.

"Yes, you will," said Bruce. "Come on."

"Wait a minute." And the little bare feet patted across the hall, bent on the execution of a new idea.

"You didn't know I was here, did you?" asked Joel, as he seated himself on the sofa beside Bruce.

"Yes, I did. You like to stay here, don't you?"

"I would like it all right if papa was here. Whose picture are you lookin' at?"

"Whose do you say it is?"

"You look better now, Annie," said Joel, look-

ing in the direction of the door; "but you forgot your feet and your dress."

Little Annie squatted at the end of the sofa, spreading her frock over her feet.

Bruce picked up the child and seated her on his lap. He smoothed back the wet hair and looked at the clean, shiny features.

"Can't you tell me whose picture this is?"

"Why, it's Aunt Milly when she was a little girl. Do you think she was a pretty little girl?" And she bent her head over the photograph.

"Let me see," said Joel, laying hold of the book.

"Wait." Little Annie jerked back the album, and looked again at the picture.

"Joel, when you go out, if you will look on the hat-rack, you will find a box of candy," said Bruce.

"Well, ain't some of it for Aunt Milly?" He ran out to fetch it.

"Thank you, sir," he said, returning with the box. "Ain't any of it for Aunt Milly?"

"I brought it every bit to you. You can do as you please with it."

"Oh, ain't it a lot! You are a fine fellow anyhow, gran'pa said. Aunt Milly, she said you would do, and I think so too. But of course I'll give her some. Here, Aunt Milly, take some of it." He held out the open box to that young lady, who was then entering the room.

"It's nice, Joel, but I don't wish any to-night."

"She's afraid it might make her stomach hurt her if she eats it to-night, I reckons," said little Annie.

"Hush! sh! She means Aunt Milly might have bad dreams," explained Joel, looking at Bruce. "Annie always does when she eats it at night."

"So do you," said little Annie.

"Well, I think you'd better see gran'ma," pleaded Camilla, facing the piano in her confusion.

"I will if you'll play that little jig of a piece," said Joel.

Camilla, glad of the opportunity, seated herself at the piano and commenced playing the requested jig.

Little Annie slid down from Bruce's lap and joined her brother in capering over the floor, endeavoring to dance.

Soon Jim thrust in his head at the door, saying: "Your gran'ma says fer you to come on and go to bed."

"I ain't sleepy," protested little Annie.

"But then we must go," said Joel. "I'm so much obliged to you for the candy, Mr. Bruce. Annie, when you get to be growed up like Aunt Milly, maybe Mr. Bruce will come to see you—maybe so. I don't know, he might be married by that time—might be."

"I hope he *will* come," said she, looking toward Bruce.

"I will, I expect. Come and kiss me good-night now." Bruce held out his arms to the baby.

"Well; does young ladies do that way? I reckon Aunt Milly does."

"Of course she don't," said Joel, observing

Aunt Milly narrowly; "she's growed up and knows better. Come on, Annie."

Camilla remained seated at the piano. She played one selection after another until she very nearly exhausted her limited stock.

"That's very pretty," said Bruce, at length, drawing his chair near the piano; "but don't tire yourself out this time. I'll want to hear you again."

"If you want to hear me, perhaps you'd better listen while I'm in the notion."

"I'll admit the force of the argument. For I've asked you to play a good many times, and you've always refused on the plea that you could not play. Of course I knew that you could, for I've heard you at other times."

"No, I can't play. When I'm in the notion, I make a pretense at it."

"Why, you play fairly well; but you talk better."

"I talk better, do I? I'm glad to hear it. Thank you. I knew before that I couldn't play."

"But you can play—a little. And I should like to know what will put you in the notion." He rose and rested his arm on the piano.

"Really, I don't play well enough to consider that." She affected displeasure at his remark, when his frankness delighted her.

"But I should like to know, anyhow."

"Anyhow?" She knew that he would not modify what he had said. "Sometimes playing stimulates mental action and helps me to decide which of two ways to take."

"Come over here and tell me about it then," he said, catching her fingers, and leading her to the sofa in spite of her endeavors to release her hand.

"Do you realize," said he, as Camilla crowded herself into the corner of the sofa, "that you have never yet shown the least regard for a lover's privileges—you have never been half so good as little Annie gives you credit for being."

"Well, I'm 'growed up and know better,'" she quoted Joel, laughing.

"Now, seriously, I should like to know if my pleadings have no effect on you whatever?"

"They certainly have an effect." She moved to a chair near the sofa, thinking: "I can't marry him. I just can't."

"Well, I think I must be a very poor lover, or the people who write novels don't tell it straight."

"You certainly don't expect just every-day folks to do as they do in books. It would be inconsistent. Think of you actually fighting a duel, and perhaps two or three within a year, for the sake of a fair lady's hand."

"But duels are not actually customary now, you know, among us more civilized Kentuckians. If it were necessary, though, I could fight."

"Could fight?"

"I would fight people, fire, and water for the sake of one fair lady. You know I would." Then his mind reverted to a recent time when he wanted to fight a man, and this act, he now considered, would not have been fighting for Camilla, either.

Camilla believed that Bruce spoke the truth.

She looked down at the broad, scarlet bow of ribbon which flaunted its loops and streamers in place of the one-time chiffon bow.

"Sometimes there is something worse than people, fire, or water to fight," she said.

"What's that?"

"One's own self." She thought of saying that she loved him too much to bring him into an embarrassing relationship.

"I admit it," Bruce said, thinking of the implied thoughtlessness of Camilla in his desire to revenge his wrong on her brother-in-law. "Do you know about it? If you don't, I wish you to know, and then I shall feel easier. I was angry. I made threats, but I never carried them out, and I'm sorry that I ever made them. You shall never have another chance to forgive me for attention to my interests above yours."

"I don't know what you are talking about. I haven't heard of anything wrong that you have done."

"Well, I was as angry as could be. I threatened to prosecute him, but Uncle Dan took the matter into his hands, and you know the rest, I reckon."

"I shouldn't have blamed you if you had."

"Camilla, you don't mean that."

"It was enough to make you want to do it, anyhow."

"You'll see though if I don't make amends to you in the future for my thoughtlessness of you in the past."

"And I must try to make amends to you for the behavior of other people. Bruce, you know I

can't think of bringing you into a closer relationship with him now. It would be too unpleasant for you. I can't think of allowing you to sacrifice yourself in any such way." She picked up her fan and began toying with it.

Bruce regarded Camilla in silence for a few minutes. Then he bent forward and took hold of the fan, and she promptly released it.

"What are you saying?" he asked.

Camilla looked at the bow of scarlet ribbon instead of into the upturned face. She wound the end of one streamer over her forefinger, slipped her chair back, and said:

"I can not marry you now. I should always feel mean for having brought the embarrassment upon you."

"Having brought embarrassment upon me? Ha, ha, ha!" He looked down at the fan which he was opening and closing, and then he looked up again. "Which do you think would embarrass me the more—that, or the poorest life a fellow ever lived? Which? Can't you answer me out of your own heart?"

Camilla unwound the streamer from her finger, and wound around the other streamer.

"I can't do it, Bruce. I can't let you marry me now," she said.

"Camilla, what is the use of talking that way? You know you wouldn't wreck my life and your own, too, just for that. Besides, it's all over, and will never occur again."

"But even this might be better than risk wreck-

ing it in the future." She resorted to her second argument in store.

"Risk wrecking whose life in the future?"

"Well, mine."

"You know I have promised to consider your interests before my own. It'll be my pleasure to do it. Have you no confidence in my word?"

"Well, you know I've always been a little afraid of marrying, anyhow. Now since I've seen more of women's trials, I can't consent to marry."

"You must have a very exalted opinion of me," Bruce said. His anger was rising.

"Now, Bruce, you know I don't think you would ever do anything wrong like that, but I can't marry you."

"A while ago it was my interest of which you were so mindful, and now it's your own." Bruce straightened up, and let the fan fall across his knee. "I don't quite understand, I confess. Do you wish to break our engagement?"

"I do." She unwound the ribbon from her finger, and rested her hand on the arm of the chair.

"Is it on account of anything that I've done?"

"Nothing whatever. I have only praise for you." She spoke truly.

"What is it then?"

"I decline to be catechised any further. Isn't it enough that I can not marry you now?"

"I don't want you to marry me now, but I do want you to marry me this fall." Bruce regained his good temper. "Let us talk about our bridal trip. How would you like to go North? Wouldn't

you like to visit New York, Boston and Philadelphia and the other principal places of interest?"

Camilla smiled and said she thought it would be a delightful trip.

"Well, we will go."

"How long will you stay?"

"Whatever you say; two, three, or four weeks."

Camilla's eyes wandered to the table on which lay the photograph album and a box of stereoscopic views, and she thought: "If he would only stay up there, perhaps—but then I can't marry him. I don't want to."

"While we are at Boston we'll visit the several points of historical interest about there," he ran on. "We will go out to Cambridge and see Harvard, and we will be happier than if we had the combined knowledge of all the professors there, won't we?"

"Perhaps so, if I didn't have to come back then, and live on a farm," she thought; but for an answer she only looked at the floor.

"We'll be happy then. I'm happy now with you, sweetheart." He reached over and folded her hand between both of his.

"No, Bruce, consider yourself released from any engagement to marry me," she said, withdrawing her hand.

"Camilla, you have never loved me!" And the whole course of her actions flashed before him, convincing him of the truth of his accusation.

"Why should you want to marry me, then?"

"Why should you engage yourself to me, then? I thought that was proof of your love."

"And so you will proceed to hate me?"

"I don't promise what I shall do, but what I have done is to love you with my whole heart. Even in the light of this, I'm not ashamed of it, for I thought you were sincere." He laid the fan back on her lap.

"You don't mind indicating the position to which I have descended in your estimation, if you did love me."

"It's only candor," he said in a voice of real anguish.

"I'm sorry. I *am* sorry." His sincerity touched her.

"My case demands no pity. I have loved truly, and loved what I thought was a true woman."

"Don't be too hard on me, Bruce. You don't know it all, and I can't tell you." She thought of the influences that had almost forced her into an engagement with him. "If I could, I don't know that it would make you think any better of me," she said. "For I should have acted differently in spite of them," she thought.

"Why not tell me?" he said, rising, and standing before her.

"I can't; besides, it would do no good."

With his hands folded behind him, he looked at her long, thinking: "I wish I had kissed her once, anyhow, when I thought she was true. But now to kiss her when I know she never loved me, I will not!" And he grasped one hand with the other as if to hold himself from the act.

"You want me to go?" he said, at length.

"I do."

He passed out into the night.

She lingered in the chair where he had left her until his departing buggy-wheels sounded as a distant echo.

After going to her room, she flung herself in a large rocking-chair and gave herself up to conflicting emotions.

While her personal wishes were clearly defined in the course which she had just pursued, she wished that he had loved her less. She knew all along that he cared for her very much—as well as she could understand when she had never given more than a few passing thoughts to any particular man. She thought that her other lovers had been more piqued than genuinely grieved at their dismissal. However, she never actually promised to marry any of these. And all, so far as she knew, had recovered, and she could but hope that Bruce would be restored in time.

But his disappointment impressed her differently from that of any of the others. There was a ring of seriousness and strength that she had never perceived in any of them. She felt a compunction of conscience wholly new to her. She feared that his experience would leave a scar. Believing that she had caused Bruce pain, at first she could not rejoice fully in her sensation of freedom. But she removed the large bow of scarlet ribbon from the bosom of her gown, and waved it, thinking: "My banner of independence brought it to me. I know it did." She smiled at her foolish-

ness, and the joy of being free again rose far above her sympathy for Bruce.

She got up, went to the dressing-case, and stood her bow on the large pin-cushion. She spread the loops against the mirror and the streamers over the cushion. "Now stay in sight, for I'll need all my store of what you stand for," she thought; "because I have to tell mother yet. But Alvin's scrape helped me out wonderfully, didn't it? I fear even you, bow, could not have availed against mother without it. I ought to be very grateful to Alvin. Think of what might have been!"

But upon remembering Bruce, she turned from the glass and said: "If I could only make amends to him in some way! Perhaps the time will come when I can, but in the meanwhile I'll rejoice." And she lifted the front of her skirts above her toes and whirled off through the room in a waltz.

Jostling against the centre table, she stopped and moved it, saying, "Let nothing bar my progress now, for I intend to dance to the tune of freedom."

And dance she did until she heard the clock in her mother's room beneath her strike, and she knew that it was time for her to be abed.

But before undressing she drew up a chair to the table, sat down, and again examined the pictures of New York in the magazine.

When the sunlight streamed through the open window the next morning, awakening her, she looked out on the world, experiencing a sense of relief for which she could not account. Then her

eyes fell upon the table in its unusual place, and the happenings of the past evening recurred to her.

By and by she went to the pantry to get a biscuit and a chicken wing for her breakfast, as the dishes had been cleared away.

Joel bounded across the porch, calling, "I beat you up this mornin', Aunt Milly."

And little Annie followed, saying, "So did I."

The sight of the children reminded Camilla that she had their heads to comb in addition to her usual duties. She finished everything, and then picked up a book. But realizing her inability to concentrate her mind that morning upon anything wholly impersonal, she soon exchanged the book for a piece of linen. The cloth was blocked out for a table-scarf. With the article in hand, she sat down upon the broad sill of the front door more to decide further upon the disposal of her freedom than to occupy herself with work.

An hour later, Mrs. Morgan came in from the back yard, where she was having Jim build a house for her ducks. Finding Camilla rapidly removing the threads from the cloth, she said in astonishment:

"Why, you're pullin' out so many! I thought you just intended to hemstitch it, but you have a space there big enough for a pattern."

Camilla did not admit that she had not noticed what she was doing. She only thought that she could afford to work a pattern now.

"You ought to have let the plain hemstitchin'

answer, specially as we'll have so much sewin' on hand before long. What did he say 'bout Alvin?"

"He said that was all over now."

"He did? Your father said he 'ud get all right about it. He's a fine fellow anyhow, Bruce is."

Camilla was not sure that she had commenced right, but remembering the bow on her dressing-case, she continued:

"But it makes a difference with me. Mother, do you suppose I can marry now, and incur unhappiness for all my future life?"

"Why, Bruce is all right, child. You needn't be afraid of that."

"Mother, you know I don't like to live on a farm. I don't want to marry. And I don't love Bruce Turner."

"I don't see why you don't love him. He is the nicest young man I know."

"I know he is; but I can't marry him."

"Camilla Morgan! what do you mean? Has *he* got out o' the notion?"

"He hadn't till I told him I had. I told him so last night."

"Now you didn't!"

"Yes'm, I did."

CHAPTER XII

Joel and little Annie used the turkey-pens for playhouses during the wanderings of the fowls in the wheat-fields. Little Annie placed two or three blocks of wood in one pen for seats. When Joel came to visit, his hostess invited him to have a chair, pointing to one of the blocks, while she seated herself upon another.

"How are you to-day, Mrs. Brown?" asked Joel, adjusting himself to the chair.

"Very well, but I have got the pneumonias, I thinks," Mrs. Brown answered, turning her head to one side.

"That's bad. Is all your little chilluns well?" And Joel smoothed the dress of his own rag-doll.

"Yes'm; but one of 'em, Daisy, has most got the consumptions." The mother placed Daisy against a side of the pen. "Now set up straight, Hun," she said.

"Well, this is a right pleasant day to-day," Joel said, endeavoring to sustain the conversation.

"Yes'm; but it's right warm. Did you leave the most of your babies at home, Mrs. Rice?"

"Yes'm. I just brought Clover 'long, she cried so. I must be goin'. I 'spect the others will want me. I told 'em to get dinner while I was away." He rose to go.

"Set longer, Mrs. Rice." Little Annie imitated the pleadings of her mamma to callers.

"I would like to, but I must go."

"Oh, stay longer, can't you?"

"No, no, I must go, thank you; but, Mrs. Brown, haven't you bought a new hat?"

"Yes'm." She hesitated a minute, and then said, "I'll bring it in and let you see it."

"That's so much trouble. Just let me go with you."

And Mrs. Rice followed Mrs. Brown to the back of the pen, where Mrs. Brown exhibited a hat made of oak leaves pinned together with tiny sticks.

"Oh, ain't it beautiful!" exclaimed Mrs. Rice. "Is there any more like it?"

"Yes'm; no'm." Then she whispered in confidence, "Joel, Aunt Milly will make you one. She made mine."

"I know it, Annie," he whispered. "I'm just talkin', I don't want any." In a louder tone, he said: "Are you goin' to wear it Sunday, Mrs. Brown? It's so beautiful. I wish I had one. Have you got any new dresses?"

"One. It's a pink silk." And she reached behind a rock and pulled out a calico apron which belonged to her grandmother. "It ain't shore 'nough," she whispered. And louder, "It goes this way." She spread the article over the front of her frock.

"Is these the trimmin's?" He caught up a torn corner.

"Ain't it 'squisite? I must go now shore 'nough. Come to see me, Mrs. Brown, and bring your chilluns. Good-by."

Turning to Daisy, Mrs. Brown said:

"I think you better go to bed, Hun. Is you

sick much? I hope not. I loves you so good." And she kissed the head of the rag infant. Then she let it fall to the ground while she pulled up grass and patted it into a bed against the side of the pen. "You ought to have been to bed sooner, I 'spects," she said, when she laid the doll on the bed; "but Mrs. Rice stayed so long. I was real glad when she left, not shore 'nough, but just 'tend like. Lay down, Hun. Your mamma is just goin' out a minute; she'll be back d'rectly."

And a feeble knock sounded on the foot-wide plank wall of the neighboring pen.

"Come in," called Mrs. Rice.

"I just thought I would come over and set a while with you."

"Well, we is goin' to have a big dinner d'rectly. 'Scuse me a minute." He ran to the house, and came back, carrying his box of candy. He walked into the pen, put down the box on a bunch of grass, and said, "Come out to dinner, Mrs. Brown."

"Yes'm." And little Annie sat down at one end of the box and helped herself liberally.

Joel looked on a few minutes, and then said:

"Mrs. Brown,—Annie,—that ain't the way company does. They just takes a little bit."

"But I wanted it," protested she.

"Well, are you goin' to be company, or you just goin' to be Annie?"

"Oh, I'm company."

"Well, then, when I pass it to you and ask you to have some more, you must just look at it, and say, 'No, I thank you.'"

Little Annie pulled up a handful of grass without answering.

"Mrs. Brown, do have some more," Mrs. Rice said, at length: "You haven't eat any hardly."

"I believe I'll be Annie," Mrs. Brown said, helping herself with both hands.

"I'm not *a-goin' to play!*" cried Joel. He picked up his box and carried it to the house. As he passed along the back porch, he overheard his grandmother say:

"Well, I never! To have caught him, and then turned him a-loose. She'll fish a long time before another like *him* will bite. I don't know what she means, myself."

"Who's been fishin', gran'ma?" asked Joel, halting at the table.

"Your Aunt Milly, that's who!" And she jerked her head back and brought down her chin, as she stirred the sugar into the pudding.

"She has! Was it a very big fish that got away from her?" inquired Joel, much interested.

"It was the biggest one she'll ever ketch."

"Where did she go?"

"Oh, never mind. You go 'long."

"I want to put my box somewhere. Somewhere that Annie can't find it."

"What've you got in it?"

"Some candy Mr. Bruce give me last night. Annie will eat it all up if I don't hide it."

"Let me see."

Joel opened the box and exhibited the contents.

"Well, I never! Did he bring it to you?"

"Yes'm, he did; and he told me to do just what

I wanted to with it. You take a piece, but I want to save some of it for papa."

"For your papa!" Her head went back, her chin came down, and her black eyes snapped as if she thought the world was going very wrong indeed. "Well, take it up-stairs."

"Oh, I know a place." And he scampered to the parlor and placed his box on the floor behind the lace curtains at the back window. Then he took up the rug which lay in front of the sofa and put it across the curtains.

"What are you doin' in there?" called Camilla.

"I'll tell you if you won't tell Annie," Joel said, as he closed the door upon his candy. Then he went to the front door where Camilla still sat drawing threads from the linen square. Another thought, however, again presented itself very forcibly, and instead of explaining the object of his errand in the parlor, he said:

"Aunt Milly, next time you go fishin' let me go with you, won't you?"

"Why, I haven't been fishin', Joel, not lately."

"Gran'ma said you had. She said you caught a big fish, and then turned him a-loose. On purpose, I reckon she must have thought. What made you do it, Aunt Milly?"

"I couldn't hold it, perhaps," said Camilla, laughing. "Did grandma seem to think I ought to have held it anyhow?"

"She looked like it. I expect gran'ma could hold a fish. Could we get back before dinner if we was to go to-day?"

"You could carry your dinner with you, I reckon."

"But papa might come while we was away."

"Why, did he say he would come for you to-day?"

"He didn't say so, but I believe he will."

"You are not homesick, are you?"

"I don't know what that is."

"You don't want to see your mamma, I reckon?"

"No, not much. There comes Annie." Then he whispered: "Don't tell her I've been in the parlor. I hid my candy in there."

"What have you been doing with Miss Daisy?" asked Camilla, as little Annie seated herself upon the top step. "Her face is so sticky."

"I been just tryin' to give her some candy. I thought it might make her get better. Just 'tend like, you know, Aunt Milly."

"Is she very sick?"

"No'm, not much; she was. She cried to come with me."

"Do you always let her do as she wants to when she cries?"

"Yes'm; if she cries loud 'nough."

"You do?" And Camilla smiled at this repetition of her sister's methods.

"She ought to have just slapped her and shook her good when she hollered so loud, oughtn't she?" Joel said.

"I don't know much about what ought to be done with children." Camilla thought that it was

easier for her not to interfere with her sister's ways.

"No," said little Annie, "I loves my Daisy too much for that." And she pressed her own sticky face against the sticky face of the doll.

"Aunt Milly, what do you want to make holes in that goods for?" asked Joel. "I don't think that looks pretty."

"But I'm going to fill it up again, partially; then it will look pretty."

"What's the use of that? Just makin' holes in it, and then sewin' 'em up again. I think it's a mushy way to do."

"That's because you are a boy and don't know about such things. Annie, what do you think about it?"

"It's all right, I reckons, if it makes it look pretty."

"There! Annie reasons like a woman."

"Well, I'm glad I'm not. I would rather make mud pies when I get to be a man than do that. Come on, Annie, let's go make some now." Joel got up and leaped into the yard. "Aunt Milly, you come too," he said; "it's more fun."

"All right." Camilla was tired of her present employment. She folded the scarf, laid it on the table in the hall, and then followed the children to the bare spot at one side of the house.

She helped them loosen the soil, carry water, and provide baking boards. When she sat down with them, she manifested as much interest in the play as did the children.

Only small, flat biscuits appeared upon the

board for a while. At length, however, Camilla endeavored to express her thoughts in her work. She made a bell, but upon attempting to put a crack in one side, it fell in a heap. She wondered why a liberty-bell should have a crack in the side anyhow, but she knew that the bell among the stereoscopic views in the parlor had a crack in it. She made a second, but it too proved unsatisfactory. "I could never be an artist," she thought, "but I don't want to be. I just want to be free. I wish I *could* put the clapper and crack in this bell and have it complete so it would do justice to my sensation of liberty."

"Aunt Milly has made a tent," said Joel; "one like the soldiers live in."

"A tent?" said she, and she thought, "Well, if I have failed to get my liberty then I'll be a soldier in a tent and fight for it yet."

"It's the dinner-bell, I think," said little Annie.

"Oh, is it?" said Joel. "I hope it ain't, 'cause it will make me hungry."

"Well, you can eat this biscuit," said little Annie, offering a cake of mud, and laughing.

"There is the sure-enough dinner-bell," said Camilla; "and you need not be hungry long. Let us quit now."

"Play with us again after dinner, please?" begged little Annie.

"You won't want to make pies and cakes just after dinner, will you? I think I would rather take a nap."

"But I don't want to go to sleep," protested little Annie.

"I don't have to, for I'm too big," spoke the man of six.

"Please, Aunt Milly, I don't want to," pleaded little Annie.

"I never said you must, child. I said that *I* was going to. I'm not going to make you if you don't want to." And she thought, "It's too much trouble."

"Aunt Milly is a nice Aunt Milly," said little Annie. "I likes her, don't you?" Camilla and the children were going toward the house.

"She's nice to us when it's not too much trouble to her."

This piece of information concerning herself startled Camilla somewhat, and therefore she made no reply.

"You have been nice this morning, Aunt Milly," said Joel, endeavoring to make amends for his remark.

Mr. Morgan and his man-servant came in answer to the bell. They stood their scythes by the yard gate, for they expected to return to the field after dinner to continue cutting weeds.

While Mr. Morgan was washing his face and hands, Mrs. Morgan called to him to come into the pantry.

"You want me to open the other barrel of sugar?" he asked upon entering.

"Yes," she said; "but it ain't that." Her voice sounded sepulchral, coming as it did from the utmost depths of the sugar barrel.

"I hope it's nothing as bad as a body might think from your talk," he said, jocosely. Then he

feared somewhat that there might be a new real trouble.

"It's about Camilla," Mrs. Morgan said, as her head came out of the barrel.

Mr. Morgan felt a sense of relief.

"She's gone an' broke her engagement with Bruce Turner. She broke it last night."

"Why, how come? Did she see he was wantin' to break off?"

"*Him* want to break off? No! he'd a married her quick enough. It was her." And Mrs. Morgan's head went back and her chin came down apparently at the sugar-dish which she held in her hands. "It was not him *a-tall*."

"What's the matter, then, with her?" Mr. Morgan asked, placing his hand on a shelf.

"She's got it into her head somehow or other that she don't want to marry. She don't love him or some such nonsense. I think she's doin' a mighty bad thing myself, and I told her so. C. D., you talk to her and—make her do what she ought to."

"If she's already broke the engagement, I don't see what good my talkin' would do."

"Maybe she could make it up with him."

"But if she don't love him—I don't think you wanted to marry the other fellow you didn't love, did you? And Camilla is pretty much like her ma in some things."

"C. D. Morgan!" And her head went back, and her chin came down again at the sugar-dish. "That was different. My mother didn't want me to marry you, you know she didn't."

Mr. Morgan laughed in spite of the difference in the situations, and said:

"It ain't no use as I can see. But if she wants to marry at all, I expect she'd a better married him; that is, if she could love him."

"If she could love him! Why couldn't she learn to love him? C. D., talkin' 'bout Camilla bein' like me, she's just like you. I don't see why anybody as sensible as you are in most things should show so little reason 'bout this. After she's married to him for a while, you know it will be the same as if she'd a loved him at first." And she thought of the other man who crossed her path, and of his wife who now lived in town and escaped the drudgery incident to the life of a farmer's wife.

"Now, Jenny, you don't think that, do you?" He laid his hands on her shoulders, and looked down into her face. "I don't believe you actually do." And his mind wandered to the days when he knew she did not—those days when her head went back and her chin came down as only the accompaniment of some saucy remark that charmed him. He never dreamed then that the actions would become imperative gestures, expressive of a domineering nature. Yet his heart had clung to her during the change, and he believed that her heart remained faithful to him. He thought that young people should love one another when they set out together, and so he said:

"I don't want to see Camilla marry anybody unless she loves him. If she would be content to

live 'long here with us always, I 'ud be glad 'nough of it."

"Well, C. D., I see there ain't no reasonin' with you now. Dinner is waitin'. I think you ought to talk to Camilla afterwards though, and make her do the right way."

She went out and waited for him to follow so that she could lock the pantry door.

Late in the afternoon the sound of buggy-wheels aroused Camilla from her reverie. She sat up in the hammock which was swung between two poplar trees in the lower part of the front yard. She laid down her book in which she had not understood two consecutive lines that she had read, and went to the stile to meet Alvin Crane. She was not glad to see Alvin; she went only out of the gratitude that she considered was due him for assisting her in regaining her freedom. When she reached the stile, she smiled from joy of her experience.

The smile acted upon Alvin as if it beamed for the especial purpose of giving him a cordial greeting. It warmed Alvin's chilled heart. It warmed his heart in a degree toward all the world, and toward Camilla in particular. He wished that his wife possessed more of the sunny, forgiving nature of her sister.

"I have been lookin' for you," said Joel, as he and little Annie met their father in the walk.

"Have *you* been lookin' for papa?" Alvin asked of the baby as he lifted her in his arms.

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you! You dear, good papa." Little Annie hugged her father, and laid her face against his.

Alvin blushed that the innocent lips should apply such terms to him, and that another should hear them applied; but he pressed the little one closer to his bosom.

Camilla, out of genuine compassion for Alvin this time, walked on in front of him and the children. She went through the hall. When she returned she brought a dipper of water and offered it to Alvin. Her mother had just finished reading a note which she handed to Camilla. It was an invitation to dine with Mrs. Casey. "I reckon we'd better go," Camilla remarked. "Mrs. Casey always has things in style."

When Alvin and the children were on their way home, Joel removed the lid from his box of candy, and said:

"Papa, take all you want."

"Candy? where'd you get it?"

"Mr. Bruce brought it to me last night. Wasn't he good? When I get to be a man, I 'ud rather be like him than anybody else, 'cept you. I 'ud rather be like you the most. I would like to be a man takin' candy round to all the little chillun, and eatin' as much of it as I wanted myse'f."

"You would like to be Santa Claus, then, I reckons," said little Annie.

"He has to give to most too many. I'm afraid he don't get a chance to eat any himself. Papa, take some. I saved it for you." He leaned over

little Annie and whispered that he had hidden the box in the parlor behind the curtains.

"Oh, yes! I heard," said little Annie. "When I get some candy, I'll hide it too. Let me tell you, papa." She turned her face toward him and whispered the place. "Oh, yes! Oh, yes!" she said in defiant exultation.

"Papa, I want you to have some," insisted Joel.

And Alvin engaged in a battle between his wish not to partake of Bruce Turner's candy and his desire to please Joel by sharing it with him. So he said:

"Put it up. 'I'll see about it after a while.'" He did not think of the severity of the request.

Joel was disappointed, but he was cheerful; he replaced the lid, saying:

"I knew I was goin' to get it."

"Knew you were goin' to get it?" asked Alvin.

"How did you know it?"

Joel told of Bruce's offering him the fifty cents, and then said:

"I thought he might buy me some candy with it though, so I asked God please to make him do it."

Little Annie laughed, but Alvin turned a serious face upon his boy.

"I knew you was comin' to-day, too," said Joel.

"How so, son?"

"'Cause I knew you couldn't help yourself no more'n Mr. Bruce could." Then he thought that his father might object to being forced to obey, and so he added, "I wanted to eat some of my candy, and I didn't want to take any more of it

till you'd had some, so—I—asked God to send you."

"Well, open your box. I'll take some." And Alvin picked out several pieces. "That's enough now."

He put a chocolate-drop between his teeth. Then he struck the horse with the line, and said, "Go 'long!"

CHAPTER XIII

It was late in August.

The day that Mrs. Casey appointed for her dining dawned auspiciously.

She and her daughter flitted from place to place, endeavoring to discharge the many remaining duties before the guests should begin to arrive.

But while they were setting the long table, Mrs. Casey said to Mira:

"I should not have invited them to-day, but knowing that Mrs. Crane feels so bad about her recent trouble, I thought maybe it would help her to ask her out among people. Perhaps help her mother and sister too."

"You are always so thoughtful of others, mamma," said Mira, who had now turned sixteen, and had awakened to an appreciation of her mother as a woman.

"Well, I've known trouble, and so I can sympathize with others who experience it."

"Trouble? What trouble, mamma?" Then she thought of her father's death, and she was provoked with herself for having asked the question.

He had died five years before—when Sara was a babe and Cora was only two years old. But time had robbed her own memory of the poignant sting, and only an after-thought, one that belonged to the dawn of the woman-nature, prompted her to say:

"It must have been hard for you, mamma."

"What?"

"Papa's death, and then the sole care of us children."

"It was." And the mother experienced astonishment mingled with both alarm and pleasure that Mira should view the situation from the position of a woman and not from that of the child which she was but a short while ago. She hastened to confide to the woman: "But that was not all."

"What else, mamma?" Mira asked, as she finished putting the pickles on the table.

"I have thought I would tell you when you were older," Mrs. Casey replied, folding a napkin and laying it in place. Then she realized that the time which she had looked forward to had come—the time when Mira should understand as a woman. She glanced across the table at her child, and felt that she had found a friend, a companion, and a vacancy in her life seemed suddenly to be filled. Then she yielded to her desire to open her sore heart to be soothed by sweet sympathy.

"Mira," Mrs. Casey said, going around to the other side of the table, "it was before we came here, your father killed a man." She knew that Mira shrank from her as if she had dealt her a blow. Then, for the first time, she thought of what the act might mean to the daughter, and said: "He did it in self-defense though; but oh, it was so horrible! So horrible to him to have done it at all. It's a long story. I will tell you about it some other time.

"The man's grandfather," she ran on, "quarreled with husband's grandfather; the others took

it up, and there never was any more peace between the two factions. I was always uneasy, for your father was as bitter against them as they were against his side. I begged and begged him to keep hands off, but he felt honor bound to those of his name. The killing of the man, though, was forced upon him. He was cleared at the trial, but he never was the same afterwards. He brooded over it so, I'm sure it hastened his death. He used to walk the floor night after night, saying he could not sleep, that every time he closed his eyes the man would appear before him. How I suffered to see him that way! How terrible it all was!"

Mrs. Casey saw that the color had left Mira's cheeks and lips, and that her clasped hands shook as if she was chilled by cold.

It was the mother then who gave sympathy. For the intelligence fell upon the young ears like a thunderbolt, and the inmost recesses of the heart felt the shock.

"I, the daughter of a murderer!" the girl cried.

"Oh, don't think of it that way."

The mother's grief waxed greater that the recital of her own sorrows should have inflicted personal suffering upon her child. Cruel, indeed, seemed her disappointment.

But the unfinished duties waited, and Mrs. Casey realized that she must hurry. She knew that she had partly unfitted both herself and Mira for the day's requirements by unburdening her heart at this time.

But once more at her work, her distress became

overshadowed; not so with Mira. While the girl moved about in compliance with her mother's requests, the sorrow was too new to her to have become a part of herself.

In the meantime, a conversation relating to the dining was held in the country not far away.

Mrs. Morgan and Helen had been asked to be among Mrs. Casey's guests that day.

The inclusion of Mrs. Morgan in the invitation was only thoughtfulness on the part of Mrs. Casey. And Mrs. Morgan realized that the invitation was given without the remotest idea that she would accept it, or that she could accept it, because her physical condition was well known wherever she was acquainted.

For a while after the fire, people invited Helen, and some remembered Mrs. Morgan with a bundle of cake on the day following a dining. But, at length, the invitations quit coming, inasmuch as Helen seldom went, and Mrs. Morgan's household necessarily ceased to entertain. Hence, the appreciation bestowed upon this remembrance.

After reading the note, Mrs. Morgan placed it in her work-basket. Afterwards, when unobserved, she took it out several times, and reread it as a child who cherished the invitation to a first party would have done; and yet with a vast difference. Instead of regarding the invitation as an entrance upon pleasures, Mrs. Morgan read in it a farewell to all social enjoyment. She thought that she would never appear again at a place of entertainment, or at any other place outside of her own home. So she kept the invitation and

thought on it somewhat as she would have thought on a delayed funeral notice. This morning she sat in her chair by the open window with the note in her hand when Helen entered the room.

"Mother," Helen said, "I hate to leave you to-day. I wish I had declined going."

"No, no, my child, go 'long. You'll never be young again." The mother suppressed a sigh.

"I hate to leave you, though."

"Your father's dinner's on the table, is it?"

"Everything is on the table where he can find it for himself and for you, too."

"Your father will be about the house to-day, so you can go and have a good time."

Helen went to her room.

As she coiled her wavy auburn hair about the back of her head, she observed her efforts in the mirror, thinking: "A short time ago I should have considered it scarcely worth while to be particular about my appearance. For whether or not I succeeded in looking well, I knew that my position among people was fixed. They would consider me poor but respectable, and the crowd would pass me without notice. Then I felt the lack of the attention which once they lavished upon me when they looked on me as rich and proud. But now I'm glad I've had both experiences. The lesson was a hard one." She turned her head about, consulting the mirror upon the different views. "I believe, though, it was well worth the learning."

She put on a simple white lawn dress. She tied

a blue ribbon about her neck and another about her waist after the prevailing style. Yet on account of the individuality expressed in the fashioning of the bows, they looked unlike those of other girls. A delicate gold pin held her neck ribbon in place, seeming as if it was put there from necessity and not from desire of ornament.

"So I will look the best I can to-day," she thought, as she finished her toilet, "in honor of my broader nature. I'll act the part of the poor but respectable girl, in accordance with the previously settled convictions of others." And a smile lighted up her face, which of late had developed a new sweetness.

"You look so well," said Mrs. Morgan, when Helen bade her mother good-by.

After Helen left, Mrs. Morgan lay back in her chair, thinking, "While there is a difference,—it must be the color of her hair that makes it,—but no one who knew me when I was her age can look at her and not think of me." Then she put the invitation back into the basket. Her thoughts followed Helen to the dining, and in a measure the mother spent life again through her daughter.

When Captain Morgan came in he stopped in the doorway. For he wished to bask in the sunshine of his wife's face, and he feared his going farther might bring back her usual weary expression.

"You may come in," she said, looking toward him, still smiling.

"Just a minute," he said, still fearing, and wishing to carry the impression away with him.

"When you go out just take this with you and drop it in the woodbox in the kitchen," she said, affecting carelessness. She reached over and picked up the invitation. "I'm through with it," she remarked.

About eleven o'clock, Mira looked out of the window. Then she hastened to her mother, and said, "I see them coming; they're almost here."

"They are! Well, I'm not ready for them." And Mrs. Casey thought, "This is what I got by stoppin' to talk this mornin'." She said: "You will have to meet them. Here, let me help you." She assisted with the tie, and stuck a pin in Mira's belt to hide the band of her dress-skirt.

Mira went to the stile.

Mrs. Casey straightened her own neck-ribbon, and brushed her hair.

On her way to the front door she looked into the parlor to see if everything was in order. Noticing that a figure on the piano did not present its prettiest side to the front, she stepped in and turned it. Then she went to a small table which stood across one corner of the room, and drew a rose, the queen among the roses, higher than its associates in the cut-glass bowl.

There was talking outside.

When Mrs. Casey appeared at the front door, an exclamation of surprise escaped her lips. But she said that she was delighted to see each of her guests.

Mira remained at the stile while Mrs. Cliff Morgan and Camilla got out of their buggy.

Several ladies who resided in the village arrived

on foot. "Oh, so many of us at once," spoke one, pleasantly.

They passed through the gate and went up the walk.

Camilla followed, noting that each dress-skirt hung demurely straight. "It's because their under-skirts are not silk," she explained to herself, "and not one of them has the independence to hold up her dress unless she can show a silk petticoat."

And the two ladies behind Camilla saw that she wore a white cotton under-skirt whose trimming afforded no excuse for her lifting her dress. But the ladies did not know that Camilla thought the bow of scarlet ribbon on her bosom waved its streamers in greeting of comradeship.

When the guests had laid aside their hats in the sitting-room, they repaired to the parlor. The greater number of the women had carried a little needle-work with them, and the boldest took it with them at once into the parlor. Others left theirs partly concealed under their hats, each waiting for some one else to produce hers first.

The work was not brought to parade industry. Industrious, however, the majority were. But there was no way to determine who was most industrious by the amount of work accomplished during the day. For some who did the most work at home scarcely more than toyed with it there; while others plied themselves as if to avoid losing any more time than was necessary.

This employment sometimes served as a means for reaching the undercurrent of the life. When Mrs. Coleman leaned over and examined the

stitching on Mrs. Asbury's crazy quilt square, Mrs. Asbury felt free of restraint in the presence of strangers. For Lady Charming remarked that the quilt was very much like the one which belonged to her friend. Lady Charming said that every one considered her friend's quilt a beauty, but she herself liked Mrs. Asbury's better. She preferred it because of the brier-stitch throughout, and because of the one color thread. She said that light colors would fade, while orange silk would remain steadfast.

It was as Lady Charming that Helen thought of this delightful person. She had come from the city to spend a few weeks among relatives.

Under Lady Charming's tactful geniality, Mrs. Coleman, too, came quite out of her shell of reserve, and spoke glibly; that is, glibly for her. For she was accustomed to consult her husband's wishes concerning every detail of her actions. Her husband decided upon the dress-maker. He selected the hats for the children, unbecoming, expensive articles which should last three seasons at least because of the price that he paid for them. He also determined the position of the furniture. In many of these lines, Mrs. Coleman could have done better if Mr. Coleman had kept within his own province, or she had risen perforce and defied his powers. But now she was like a tree which grew on the bank of Meadowville Creek. The tree remained small because its neighbors sapped the nutriment that was necessary for its growth and crowded the requisite space for its spreading. Mr. Coleman still clung to his rightful part in the

management of affairs, thus shutting off his wife's development from either source. Mrs. Coleman, now a woman in middle life, measured only to the size of a sapling. On this occasion she expressed views as nearly her own as one could hope ever to obtain. They were these:

"It don't pay, this quilt piecin'. When you are through, it's never as pretty as a white counterpane. Nothin' is."

"Oh, the way I do it, is to work on it when I have nothin' else to do," said Mrs. Asbury. She was never known to waste her time on even reading a book. "I could not set down and work at it reg'lar."

Well, I can't do it," joined in Mrs. Nealy. Her large, crooked nose seemed at variance with her lips. "It makes me feel rather crazy myself to try to put together so many different shapes." And she unfolded her starched linen handkerchief, caught it by the centre, and held it in her hand.

"I thought I would get my work too," said Elsie Gorman, returning from the sitting-room with a bundle in her hand.

"What are you doing?" asked a young matron, looking up from her button-holes on her baby's first short dress.

"It's a fascinator." Elsie seated herself near a window.

"Is it?" said Miss Rose Fleming. "I thought maybe it was something new. How long have you been working on that, Elsie?"

"Why, let me see?" There was a twinkle in Elsie's eye.

And Helen noted that the short, upturned nose sometimes had its way.

"Wasn't it winter before last when you commenced it?" continued Miss Rose. "I don't believe you work very hard."

"Well, you see, it's my visiting-work; and it bears a record of my invitations out."

"That's it, is it?" Miss Rose laughed, and then confined herself to her overcasting.

"You did not bring your work to-day, Miss Helen," said Mrs. Casey.

And the lady with the overcasting thought, "I reckon she don't get much time for fancy-work, and she can't bring the other sort, or she's ashamed to bring it."

Helen, in the character of the poor but respectable girl, modestly replied, "I didn't bring any."

"How is your mother?" asked Mrs. Bradley, who relied sufficiently upon her conversational powers to risk them unaided by needle-work.

"I see no material change in her condition," Helen answered; "some days she feels a little better, and then on others she is not so well."

"So bad!" said two or three.

Then Lady Philosopher, as Helen afterwards thought of her, turned to her neighbor, and remarked:

"It's hard on a man." Seeing that the person to whom she spoke failed to comprehend, she added, "On the lady's husband, I mean."

"I think it's hard on the woman," said Mrs. Grose, rather more snappishly than the dulcet tones of Lady Philosopher seemed to require.

"Oh, yes, but then her husband must suffer a great deal on account of it. Of course a woman who is a sufferer can hardly be to her family what she would be in health, I have always thought."

Mrs. Grose was evidently the wrong person to sympathize with the view. Besides being a woman of no breadth of mental vision, she was sister to an invalid, and saw the situation through, perhaps, a distorted medium. When she dropped her hands on her lap, still holding her knitting-needles between her fingers, and looked at Lady Philosopher over the rim of her spectacles, her remark possessed at least the apology of honesty.

"Well, if it kin hurt the man any worse than the woman what's doin' the hurtin', I think it ought not to. It's only a limpish sort of a man that it does, I 'low."

Helen reflected that it was only a limp person, man or woman, who would suffer and not extract sweetness from the bitter. She considered that she had been limp herself, and therefore knew.

"Do you find it very warm in Philadelphia in the summer?" asked Mrs. Hedrick of a fashionably gowned little woman.

"We don't stay there in the summer, you know." Mrs. Lewis sat apart from the crowd, assuming more the aspect of an observer than that of a participant. "We go to our country-place, that is, when we don't go to the mountains or to the shore."

And the questioner gaped, expressive of her surprise that mingled with awakening memories. For in the elegant lady there was left little appar-

ent trace of the Polly Atchison of former years. And Mrs. Hedrick thought of Polly when she went to meeting with her father and mother in a single-seated buggy and wore a certain brown cloak. When the child first appeared in the wrap, it was large enough to admit of a small pillow in the back and another in the front. But by and by the back and the front filled out, and the edge of the cloak came to strike its wearer above the hem of her dress. It was this Polly that Mrs. Hedrick next addressed:

"I reckon you don't like their ways up there much, do you? It's sorter a bore, so much movin' about, ain't it?" She showed her ignorance of the Polly that she thought she knew.

"Well, one can get used to it." Mrs. Lewis decided that she would not commit herself further.

"It's so different, though, from the way you was raised. It don't seem like you could get used to it very easy."

If this remark had come from a member of the society to which Mrs. Lewis was now accustomed, she would have passed judgment on the woman's audacity. But, instead, she replied to the spirit of the speaker as well as to the words:

"It is different from what I was used to in my earlier days, but many aspects of my life there I like very much."

She thought then of her first visit to Philadelphia, and of the days previous to that visit. As Mrs. Lewis was thus engaged, the children of the

company came trooping to the house with a man amongst them.

"I heerd you was a-goin' to have a big dinner to-day," spoke no other than Uncle Dan to the hostess, who went to welcome him. "So I thought I would jes' drop in."

"Glad to see you," said Mrs. Casey.

When Uncle Dan entered the parlor, Mrs. Casey introduced him to the strangers. And he crossed the room, and shook hands with Mrs. Lewis, saying, "How air you?"

"I wish some of the other gentlemen had come," declared Mrs. Casey. "Couldn't some of you ladies prevail upon your husbands to come along?"

"Well, I never had no lady prevail upon me," said Uncle Dan. "So I jes' had to git encouragement the best way I could. Sometimes, though, when a feller goes lone hand he gits out o' retch of the other fellers."

"These ladies may not consider that very gal-lant," said Mrs. Casey.

"Oh! they understand how I mean it, I reckon. Fer they know that I'm the only man what goes to all the big dinners, an' gits to see ever' one of 'em at onct."

"Why didn't Mr. Coleman come?" asked Mrs. Casey of the lady bearing his name.

"Oh, he couldn't to-day."

Then, out of respect for form, and not because the husband of any lady present was expected, the query, with some variation, was made round the circle. Sometimes the answer was, "Mr. ———"

is very busy to-day"; and sometimes simply, "I never asked him."

After making these polite inquiries, Mrs. Casey went to the dining-room, thinking, "Uncle Dan would have missed his meal this time if my stopping to talk this morning hadn't made it late."

Soon she returned and announced dinner. The company filed out to the dining-room.

Uncle Dan was somewhat embarrassed at first when he found himself seated between two strangers, Lady Charming and Lady Useful. He glanced at Helen, who sat opposite, and determined to extricate himself from his difficulty if it should become too severe, by addressing himself to her.

But before he fully decided upon a proper subject to introduce, Lady Charming began talking, and he soon forgot that it was she of whom he stood in greater dread. He regarded her as pretty, and yet beauty did not seem to be her chief charm; intellectual, and yet intellectuality did not seem to be her most prominent attribute; good—yes, he was sure that she was good. In addition to these qualities, he found that her knowledge was tempered with the experiences which usually belong to people of seventy-five, while she did not look to be over twenty-five. Wondering what the age of such a woman could be, he pronounced her a miracle.

Helen learned that Lady Charming had heard good lectures, that she had read good books, that she had traveled—even in foreign lands. Helen thought that the mental food of this charming

woman had been thoroughly digested, and had become a part of the finely grained creature. She wished to liken Lady Charming to a beautiful painting, or to one of Mrs. Casey's handsome vases in the parlor. But remembering the very strong element that served a different purpose from either the vase or the painting, she could think of nothing more appropriate than one of the thin tea-cups belonging to Mrs. Casey's dinner-set. While the cup was pretty, it was also useful.

Uncle Dan had felt less trepidation in the beginning toward Lady Useful. Upon further acquaintance, however, he found that she was disposed to derive amusement from his eccentricities, and this disposition disquieted him.

She, too, had heard good lectures, had read good books, and had visited places of interest, but her knowledge seemed only a commodity within her possession. From Lady Useful's conversation, Helen learned that Lady Useful had rendered much unselfish service. But Helen could liken this woman to nothing more satisfactory than a large, heavy cup. She thought of a cup which she had bought several years ago at a railway restaurant for the sake of the tea. The cup had escaped destruction at the time of the fire; and now Helen sometimes took it from the kitchen-shelf and used it in measuring ingredients for cake.

Only once more did Uncle Dan desire to appeal to Helen, and it was when he intimated that he could marry yet if he wanted to. "For," he

argued, "worse men than me have married at my time of life, an' worse lookin' ones." Lady Useful laughed a significant laugh. When Uncle Dan looked at Helen he believed that she was more attractive than he had ever known her to be. "She 'ud be as grand as this one," he thought, meaning Lady Charming, "if she jes' had her chances."

Helen did not talk much, but she enjoyed the occasion in her own way. She was surprised somewhat that she could mark her development since the last dining which she attended. Upon measuring herself with the other girls present and with some of the married women, she was glad that she had spent as much time as she could spare in studying her few books. She ate along, thinking, and only half hearing the conversation around her. At length she looked up to answer Miss Rose Fleming's question. Then her eyes wandered around the table, and she thought: "People remind me of colors, and there are many shades of the various colors. There's a rainbow around Mrs. Casey's table."

"Camilla is a scarlet. When she grows older, she will be a deep, rich red; that is, if she accepts the opportunities for her highest development. Cousin Nina is a faded pink. There is a faded green, and a washed out blue. The pity of it! Lady Useful is an orange. Once a brighter hue, I judge. As she grows older the color will deepen into a still more substantial shade. Lady Charming was once a blue. As she grew older and sympathized with sorrow, and permitted her

own disappointments to be turned into sweetness of character, she became the lavender that she is now. She will be a purple when her nobleness of character makes greater growth. How I wish I could develop after the manner of Lady Charming!

"Few show any regard for their natural colors in the selection of apparel. That though wouldn't do every time, perhaps. There's Cousin Jenny dressed in black and white while she herself is brown and yellow. Mrs. Lewis recognizes her own colors; they are light blue and Nile green. Uncle Dan is a rusty brown. Yet, it seems he one time gave promise of becoming a rich, golden brown."

Helen was interrupted by other remarks that were addressed to her, and she next thought of the bountiful feast which Mrs. Casey had provided. Four courses were served.

After the last course Mira passed around the finger-bowl. Uncle Dan was engaged in conversation with Lady Charming, and failed to observe the office that the article served the ladies. So when Mira handed the dainty little bowl to Uncle Dan, with two rose-geranium leaves floating on the water, he said:

"Naw, I thank you, Honey. I've had all I kin eat. Ef you have any regard fer yer Uncle Dan's comfort, don't fetch him anything more." Seeing the amused expressions of the ladies, he thought that he would improve the mistake which he had doubtless made. So he said, "Well, I don't eat greens much nohow, ef 'tis jes' a little bit, 'cept

in the spring before anything else comes on." And to the amused expressions was added hearty laughter.

As soon as Mira could command herself sufficiently, she offered the finger-bowl to Lady Charming. Uncle Dan watched his neighbor dip her delicate finger-tips into the water and then dry them on a napkin.

"Oh, that's what you do with it, is it?" he said. Then he laughed. When he saw the last lady touch the water with the ends of her fingers, he said:

"Well, Mrs. Casey, I don't think that's much of a compliment to a party o' ladies. Fer when I eat, I use my knife an' fork, an' when I—well, when I use a bowl, I want more water in it than that has got, an' I don't want—I reckon it ain't greens, then—no flowers in my way. I 'spose, though, it suits the ladies. It gives 'em an excuse fer not wettin' their han's much. Mira, ef you'll jes' fetch it 'long back, I b'lieve I'll try it."

Mira returned with the bowl. Uncle Dan buried the fingers of first one hand and then of the other in the water, saying: "Now my fingers don't look pooty in here like the ladies' does. But when a feller's in Rome he has to do as the Romans does, they say."

Soon the company rose from the table. Some returned to the parlor, and some went to the sitting-room, and some, chiefly the girls of the party, went to the veranda.

After a short time, some one on the veranda

called to Mrs. Hedrick, who was in the parlor, to come and see Mrs. Casey's flowers.

Mrs. Hedrick left the room, and other members of the party followed her. Only Mrs. Lewis remained. She got up and walked to the table which stood across the corner. She looked at the roses in the cut-glass bowl, admiring especially the one which held its head above the others.

She clasped her fingers around the stem. The full-blown red rose was resting against the palm of her white hand, showing each handsome, nearly faultless petal, when Uncle Dan entered.

Finding her alone, he crossed the room, and stood near her. A flood of memories that had not risen in the presence of the crowd swept over him. His face flushed; he thought of the absent husband, and he began to talk on ordinary topics.

She still stood with her fingers about the rose, apparently deep in contemplation of it in spite of her civil answers to him.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she said at length, letting the flower fall back to its original position.

"Yes, 'tis that." Uncle Dan saw the absent husband in dimmer outlines. "It reminds me," he said, "of a woman among other women, all of 'em pooty an' good an' nice, but somehow the one gits up above the others an' stays there. She seems pootier an' nicer then all the rest. There's one woman what's always stood up in my mind jes' that a-way, an' when I see her fer the first time in—how many years has it been, Polly?"

"Fifteen," she said.

"To-day when I see her fer the first time in fif-

teen year, she still stands out jes' so." Knowing that he had gone as far as he could go in that direction, and as far as he wished to go, he asked, "Do you like it up there?"

"Yes, Mr. Richardson." She sat down in a chair near the table, straightened back her shoulders, and continued, "You know I always liked society; that is, that kind of society."

"Naw, you didn't *always*," Uncle Dan thought, "but I reckon it's all right that you do now." What he said was: "I'm glad you air happy then, Polly. I'm real glad you air."

"About as happy as the average, I suppose. We can't any of us have everything, you know, Mr. Richardson; and I was an ambitious girl."

"As ef I haven't cause to remember that you was," thought Uncle Dan. "And she'll be tellin' me to call her Mary nex', or worse still, Mrs. Lewis, an' I'm not a-goin' to do it." Therefore he rose to go, saying, as he extended his hand to her: "I'm glad I've seen you ag'in. I'm glad I have! And you say you air happy?"

"Well—yes," faltered she.

"I'm glad of that. You yourself could hardly be gladder."

"You are not going?" protested a chorus of voices. The ladies were entering the room.

"Yes; I reckon I'll have to go. I hate though to tear myse'f away from this fascinatin' company."

"When did you get back from the Springs?" asked one.

"Two weeks ago, I b'lieve it was."

"Did you enjoy your trip?"

"Well, I kin not say I did overmuch. But Bruce he improved, an' that's what we went fer."

"I didn't know he'd been sick," said another.

"Yas'm; the day we thrashed wheat at Captain Morgan's he got overhet some, an' he never recovered right off. The doctor he thought he 'ud mend faster ef he 'ud go to the Springs fer a spell. Bruce he wanted me to go 'long with him. I thought he orter have somebody, an' I didn't know nobody what 'ud take keer o' him as well as I would. So I 'greed to it. But I must say ef he hadn't a kep' his own head on his shoulders he 'ud a been worse off then he was when he went there."

"Why so?" asked two or three.

"Well, it was jes' this a-way. I meant it all good 'nough, but meanin' good an' doin' good ain't the same thing ever' time—not ever' time, you know. It wouldn't a proved to be that time. It never proved to be so to myse'f. I never had no wrong intentions t'wards myse'f, not as I knows of, but I got pow'ful sick anyhow."

"Why, you got sick, too?" asked some one.

"It come 'bout this a-way. I don't see no use o' havin' so many springs at one place nohow. Ef I was runnin' a Spring Resort, an' there was a whole passel o' springs round an' about, I 'ud stop up all but the right one. I would fer the sake o' humanity! That evenin' after we got there, Bruce he was sorter wore out from his trip, an' so he went to his room an' laid down. After a bit, I went out, scurryin' round a little to see what was

there, an' I found a dozen springs or more. One of 'em had iron in the water; a-nother had magnesia in it; a-nother had salt. I disremember the names o' all of 'em, there was so many. I sez to myse'f, 'I don't see no use o' Bruce wearin' hisse'f out more a-goin' to first one then t'other o' these fer a drink o' water.' So I goes back to the room an' slips in, fer Bruce he was asleep, an' gits the pitcher an' the mug off the washstand, an' slips out ag'in. Then I goes first to one spring an' a-nother, an' dips a little out o' each one of 'em till I made the rounds. When I got the pitcher 'most full, I carried it back to the house. Bruce he was still asleep, an' I thought I would jes' let him git his nap out. Bein' the pitcher was a big one, an' there was plenty more water in them springs, I drunk two or three cupfuls. After a while, Bruce he woke up, an' I took several more cupfuls right off fer his encouragement, fer the doctor said he orter drink it plentiful.

" 'Now it's yer time, boy,' I sez, after'ards, handin' him a cupful.

" 'Where did it come from?' he ast.

" 'Come from? Why, it come from all over these here hills, or from all under 'em one. I ain't no great han' at 'splainin' the hidden secrets o' Natur'. But I 'low from the manifold efforts she's put forth gittin' the water to the surface here that she ain't got no notion o' actin' no way but free-handed with sick fellers what come here to be made well. So you jes' show yer 'preciation of it by drinkin' of it plentiful like the doctor tole you.'

“ ‘But I mean is it from the Iron Spring, or which one?’ ast Bruce.

“ ‘From the Iron one an’ all the balance of ’em,’ I sez.

“ ‘Bruce he laid back then an’ busted out laughin’. ‘You don’t mean fer me to drink that?’ he ast.

“ ‘Why I thought that was what you come here fer,’ I sez.

“ ‘Not all at onct,’ he managed to say between his laughin’. ‘Mebbe that might do fer a well man, but I ain’t willin’ to risk it on a sick one.’

“ ‘Well now, you ain’t?’ An’ I spoke ’bout all the trouble I had went to to gether up that pitcherful fer him, an’ I sez, ‘Ef I had a knowed that, I ’ud a put up with jes’ one spring at a time fer my’sef.’

“ ‘I’m sorry ’bout yer trouble,’ sez Bruce, still a laughin’ fit to kill hisse’f, ‘but ef you don’t wisht you’d a put up with jes’ one at a time anyhow before you air done with it, I’m pow’ful mistaken. Don’t you take no more o’ that mixtur’, Uncle Dan.’ An’ I never; but, sir, the doctor he had to come an’ physic me up. It made me think the Spring Resort was all a hoax anyhow, but Bruce an’ the doctor they ’lowed that it wasn’t intended to be took as a mixtur’.”

Just as Uncle Dan finished, Mrs. Casey came in from the dining-room, where she had been serving dinner to the children. He took his leave of her, and bade the ladies in the parlor good-by. Then he stopped on the veranda a few minutes to say to Camilla:

"I'll tell Bruce' bout them—what do you call 'em?—finger-bowls before he fetches a lady there to give big dinners. What do you say?"

"Oh, I haven't anything to say about it, Uncle Dan." And her cheeks partook of the scarlet of her bow of satin ribbon. She turned off from him, and he saw Helen bending over a pot of heliotrope.

"There's somethin' in that flower what's like her," he thought. Her gentle ways is fragrant of her sweet mind. I don't know what the flower is fragrant of. Jes' itse'f, I reckon." And he smiled at his poetical effort.

"What is it, Uncle Dan?" asked Helen, looking up at him. "Are you happy to leave us?"

"I was jes' thinkin', but mebbe I better not tell you what it was. Well, good-evenin'. Good-evenin', ladies, to you all." And he bowed himself into the walk.

As he went toward the stile, he thought, "She has the true ring," meaning Helen, "that somehow t'other one hasn't got." The "t'other one" was Camilla. "She 'ud know how to take keer of a feller ef he got sick," Uncle Dan thought. "Ef I was a young man I know which one I would set up to. I mean ef I was a different man. There ain't none fer me as 'tis. But she never had no cold chills to-day when I called her Polly, did she?"

He stroked his horse's mane, and then climbed into the saddle. "It sounded good to her, I thought. It did fer a little while, I'm certain, fer she ain't heerd it in so long. But she was right;

she wouldn't a been satisfied to be Polly all the time. I was right, too, in thinkin' so way back yander. I couldn't a stretched up to Daniel. I reckon she seen it to-day ef she never seen it before. So it turned out all right; leastwise, I reckon it did. She's better took keer of anyhow then I could a done it, an' she's happy, she sez. Happier then she 'ud a been with jes' Dan, I 'low. I orter be ef she is, I reckon." He drew a deep breath, struck the horse with the reins, and said, "Git up!"

In the mean time, the ladies reassembled in the parlor, and some one asked Mira to play.

She sat down at the piano, but her playing was below her usual standard. Mrs. Casey divined the reason, and soon relieved her daughter by prevailing upon Cora Taylor to take her place.

As Mira returned to her chair, Helen thought, "The girl is pink with just a rim of deep, rich red developing. How pretty!"

Cora rendered two selections. These she said were all that she could play without her notes. And no one except her mother believed that she could play them as they should be played.

"You are mistaken, Cora," said Mrs. Taylor, looking up from a ruffle which she was gathering for the skirt of a dress. "I don't think you play them as you should, but they are about all I can get you to learn off."

Then the story came out. Helen saw that Mrs. Taylor had been a struggling green which the frosts of disappointment had blackened and withered. And the mother desired to develop her

daughter along the chosen lines for herself. But Cora possessed no talent in common with her mother, and so Mrs. Taylor was destined to a second disappointment.

"If mother would furnish me with ribbons, flowers, and bonnets, perhaps I could turn out something to suit me," Cora said, in a measure of self-defense.

Helen mused no longer on the folly of Mrs. Taylor's course, for she heard her aunt talking, and she wished to listen to what she said. "Well, if C. D. can't do that for me," Mrs. Morgan declared, "I don't know what he's good for."

Then Lady Philosopher spoke:

"Well, I should think you would wish to have a voice in the government of your country." She delivered each word as though it was a skilfully executed piece of work of which she was justly proud.

"I consider that I have a voice in it now," claimed Mrs. Morgan. "When C. D. does other things to suit me, I can trust him to do the votin' too. Who's goin' to look after the cookin' and the sewin' if I go to readin' to find out 'bout this man and the other one. Of course I would want to know which was the right one if I had to put my name to a paper 'bout him."

"I should think you would wish to be informed anyhow," spoke the advocate.

"That's all well enough if it's countin' fer anything. But while C. D. can 'tend to that part for the house, I don't want to have it to do. I have enough without it; things which is just as import-

ant as that is too—things that C. D. couldn't begin to do. If I have to do the votin' too, I don't know what C. D. is good for; but maybe I oughtn't have spoke so plain." She observed Camilla's face. "I reckon I'd better go before I say anything else." She rolled up her work. "It ain't fair, I don't think, to make a woman do it all, and I, for one, am mighty opposed to undertakin' it." She rose, and Mrs. Casey protested that it was too early yet to leave.

"But I have to drive a piece, you know," Mrs. Morgan pleaded. "Nina, are you goin' now? You can ride down home with us."

"Yes'm, I'll go."

Then one guest and another left, until soon the entire company had departed. The spirit of desolation hovered over Mrs. Casey and Mira, for their thoughts returned to their conversation of the morning.

That night after the children had gone to bed, Mira threw her arms around her mother and said:

"How selfish I was this morning, mamma, to think only of myself; to-night it's you I think of more. I'm so sorry for you." And the mother kissed the head which rested on her shoulder, beholding what Helen would have called the widening of the rim of deep, rich red.

CHAPTER XIV

On the morning after the dining, Camilla opened the top drawer of her dressing-case, took out a handful of loose ribbons, and laid them on the marble slab. Then she gathered up several gloves, two soiled handkerchiefs, and four or five white lawn ties. She folded the ribbons and placed them in the drawer. Afterwards she laid the gloves in pairs beside the ribbons. Upon seeing only one tan glove, she searched through the heterogeneous collection for the other, and then she remembered that Bruce Turner had put it in his pocket.

She had gone to meeting with him one evening, and after preaching they had stopped at Elsie Gorman's. Elsie had brought in some fruit, and in order to partake of it, Camilla had removed her gloves. Bruce had put them in his pocket, but Camilla had supposed that he had returned both of them. This young man, may it be said, possessed a quality that might have been called impudence if he had not been chivalrous withal.

"If he kept it purposely, I reckon he won't want it any longer," she thought. "He may be waiting now for me to send back his letters, thinking he will return it then." She took a package of letters out of the drawer, saying, "I will do that this very day."

Next she went to the table, lifted a writing-desk from its lower shelf, and looked through that. In it she found one short letter and two notes.

She sat down on the floor and reread these. Then she laid hold of the package on the dressing-case, and reread parts of some of the letters.

Afterwards, she brought an empty shoe-box from the closet, and placed the letters in it. Then she tied up the box, and wrapped it in brown paper, using twice as much as was actually required.

Upon putting the package aside, she thought, "I'm glad it's over. I'll go this very afternoon and mail it, and then I'll be through with it all forever."

Soon after dinner Camilla appeared in the doorway of her mother's room, and said:

"Is there anything you want me to do in Meadowville? I thought I would drive up there."

"Yes; I want to send some roastin' ears to your sister. I know they haven't had any yet of any consequence. Tell Jim to get 'em out of the cellar. I had him put 'em in there this mornin'. Is he through hitchin' up the horse? Who are you goin' to see this afternoon, anyhow? You was just up there yesterday."

"No one in particular." And Camilla finished buttoning her driving-gloves, considering the way of concealing the object of her trip from her mother.

"Just goin' to the post-office then? Are you expectin' anything special?"

"I'm not expecting anything."

"Your sister used to tell me ever'thing. I don't know what's to become of a girl that won't

confide in her mother. I don't know what to think of you anyhow. Ain't your father told you yet that you ought to make up with Bruce Turner?"

"Mother, you actually make me wish there never was a Bruce Turner!" replied Camilla, turning to go.

"Girls are so silly now-a-days. When you stop at Nina's tell her that she can get more corn whenever she's ready to put it up. What a crooked way it is: one child who would have all the nice things and good things if she could get 'em; the other who could have 'em won't take 'em."

"Yes'm; shall I tell Nina that?" And Camilla tried her old laugh. Then she picked up the laprobe with the box of letters under it, and went to the stile.

She drove rapidly. And as she went down next to the last hill before arriving at the village, the breaching-strap broke. Fortunately the horse stopped at once.

Camilla jumped out of the buggy. She recognized the trouble, and she believed, with the proper means, that she could manage it. But not a string could she find. Only yesterday she saw a bunch under the buggy-seat, but Jim dragged it out, doubtless, when he put in the corn. She wished that Alvin Crane would raise his own corn. Then she remembered her personal obligation to him, and more calmly considered her situation.

First she took her handkerchief and repaired one break with it. Then she removed her ribbon belt and tied it in several knots around the strap.

Taking the ribbon from her neck, she mended the strap in still a third place. "It's fortunate I happened to wear ribbons to-day," she thought. "You never looked so gay before, old John. It's a pity I didn't wear my scarlet satin bow so you could have it on your forehead. You shall have a bow, nevertheless, for I appreciate your good behavior." And she pulled out her hat-pin and stripped her hat of its red silk drapery. This she knotted and fastened in the head-strap of the bridle.

A cart stopped behind her buggy. But she was laughing about John's head ribbon and did not see Captain Morgan until he spoke from her side:

"Why, what's the matter? Are you broke down?"

"Well, yes, sir, I was; but I'm tied up again."

"I see. Did it require all this to mend the bridle? Why, John, you must have gone to sleep. Did he stumble?"

"Oh, no, it wasn't there," Camilla admitted; "it was the backing-strap."

"The backing-strap!" Captain Morgan examined the harness, and said: "You seem to have got that pretty secure, if it does look fancy. I haven't any strings though to help you out. The bridle is all right, you say?"

"Don't you think it looks all right?" said she, mischievously.

Captain Morgan turned his gentle eyes upon Camilla, and asked:

"How come you to do it?"

"Oh!" Camilla laid her head against John's neck and laughed.

"Don't you think of anything except fun?" the captain said.

"Isn't that the pleasantest thing in the world?" She raised her head, feeling ashamed of herself for some reason that she did not clearly define.

"Fun is all right in its place, Camilla, but it ought not to be the principal object in life. Think of your opportunity with all of life before you!"

"Opportunity for what? I've been wanting opportunity all my life; at any rate for some time."

"Opportunity to lay up treasures in Heaven. Think of the great amount you might store away Over There before you get old. Just think of it!"

"I never thought of Heaven at all except as a place for people to go when they have to die; and maybe for old people to study about a little. I never thought that they would do it if they didn't believe they would have to go somewhere soon. Not you, for you are different from others. I reckon the Lord just made you so. He put so many different kinds of people in the world. He only sprinkled a few like you, that is, if He made any more of your kind at all."

"Now here, child, the Lord gives a person physical life and he grows. So He gives spiritual life and the person grows. There's not much, to be sure, that a man can look upon as resulting from his own effort, but the whole depends on the little that he does do. If you take an early start, you see the chance you have. The more you do, the bigger you get, and the better able you are to lay up treasures in Heaven. Camilla, you don't want to be a Nobody Over There, do you?"

"Oh, oh! I haven't thought I was in any hurry to go Over There. I haven't had enough fun here yet."

"But it does not depend on our hurry every time."

"No, it doesn't." And his kindliness made her wish to lay bare her heart and to let him direct her.

But apparently by mutual consent that that was not the place for prolonged conversation, Captain Morgan went back to his cart, and Camilla took down the bow from John's head. Camilla thought, "If it's not all fun, John, you'd better take the will for the deed." Then she got in the buggy.

She drove to the post-office before stopping at her sister's, for she did not wish to make explanations about her package.

The mail had just arrived, and a crowd had gathered in the room and about the door outside.

The postmaster tumbled out the contents of the mail-bag on the counter. And when he finished distributing the mail, the crowd dispersed. Some among the number shuffled down the side-walk, showing no disappointment, because they knew none. They went primarily to see the fun, and secondarily to get whatever might chance to fall to them.

At length the postmaster came out and brought Camilla a letter. When she in turn gave him the box to mail, she felt equal to encountering and subduing whatever else the world held in store for her. For she considered that she had reached the end of "the affair" with Bruce Turner.

Camilla drove back to Nina's and put out the corn. Then borrowing a belt and a collar from her sister, she went to the shop to have the harness repaired.

Later, Joel and little Annie, who had ridden back with their aunt, asked her to beg their papa for some money with which to buy ice-cream. As Camilla had spent all from her own purse and still felt equal to almost any undertaking, she consented.

When she went with the children into the store, she was amused at her boldness. For she thought of Alvin's recent need of dimes. But she walked up to him and said:

"We want to buy ice-cream. It's ten cents a plate, and we haven't but five cents among us. Can you imagine where we can find the other twenty-five?"

It was a previously unheard-of request from Camilla, and Alvin regarded it as another act of graciousness. Thanking her in his heart, he placed sixty cents in her hand and told her to buy two plates each.

"No, no, no!" she declared, "one is sufficient." And she retained only the twenty-five cents.

"Mamma ought to get Aunt Milly to ask for her," said Joel, hopping about on one foot, expressive of his delight. "She thinks papa don't give her much money."

"Yes," echoed little Annie.

Camilla blushed, and Alvin turned away.

On Saturday afternoon of the same week, Uncle

Dan went to the stable to saddle a horse. It was his usual time for a trip to Meadowville. But he found that there was not an animal nearer than the pasture. Yet as the choice lay between catching a horse and doing without the weekly newspaper, besides foregoing the pleasure of hearing any news that might be afloat, he decided to get the horse.

He took down a bridle from a wooden peg just within the barn, hoping that Charley would come up and take the bit in his mouth as he sometimes did. He walked down a low hill; the horses were grazing along the bottom. He held up the bridle, calling, "Co up, co up, co up, Charley!" as though he reserved some choice gift.

Charley walked leisurely toward the extended bridle which framed Uncle Dan's face.

Uncle Dan called softly, "Co, Charley, co up," beaming satisfaction for thus easily concluding the job.

Charley stuck his nose to the bridle, and then galloped off, as much as to say that he had changed his mind.

Uncle Dan dropped his hands to his sides, and the face out of the frame expressed strong indignation. He next called Ned, but Ned seemed to know his own mind from the beginning, and only scampered away across the pasture.

Uncle Dan slung the bridle to the ground and trotted after the herd as fast as his short, fat legs, unaccustomed to the exercise, would permit. He went up hill and down until he fairly panted for

breath, and the perspiration ran down the sides of his scarlet face in streamlets.

At length coming upon the bridle, he dropped down by it in despair. He pulled first one shirt-sleeve and then the other from against his arms, saying, "Shucks! ef I'd a knowed the whole passel of 'em was a-goin' to run like steam-engines, I wouldn't 'a' went after 'em. Naw, I wouldn't!"

He determined to give up the chase. But as he rose with the bridle in his hand, Charley walked up and waited to receive the bit.

"Why didn't you do that at first, you rascal!" said Uncle Dan, as he fastened the strap around the horse's throat. "You jes' wanted to give me a run, did you? I reckon I jes' 'bout as well 've walked to Meadowville in the first place an' been done with it."

When Uncle Dan asked for his newspapers, Mr. Gorman handed him also a box for Bruce Turner.

The next afternoon Bruce Turner let down the leaf of the writing-desk and seated himself in front of it.

He drew a package of letters from a pigeon-hole, took them out of their envelopes, one by one, and reread every line.

At first he obtained a degree of his former pleasure. But in the light of his present knowledge he soon saw that wit took the place of sentiment. This adroitness, however, demanded a certain admiration in spite of his disposition to resent the way in which he had been treated.

From another pigeon-hole he drew forth a tan

kid-glove, straightened one finger after another, stretched it out full length on the leaf of the desk, and smiled. He remarked half aloud: "I will not be mocked by the glove when I can't have the hand. I'll send it back with her letters. I'm sick of pretenses."

Then he thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, tilted his chair on its hind posts, and thought. This, though, was not the first time since his last interview with Camilla that he had thought long and seriously. His life now seemed without interest, for she was the central figure around which he had developed every plan. But why she deceived him continued to perplex him. Two or three times he took up his pen to ask her again, but each time laid it down, thinking that he would likely become none the wiser for asking. So instead of writing, he emptied another pigeon-hole, taking from it a bow of scarlet chiffon.

This he had found in his buggy. And he had told Camilla that he intended to keep it.

Now as the bow lay on the desk before him, his attitude toward it was one of mingled resentment, amusement, and affection. "It deserves to be disposed of in no ordinary way, at any rate," he decided at length. So he opened the book-case, took out a decorated box, and removed the linen note paper. And carefully folding the bow, he laid it in the box. He went out of the house and walked down to the little graveyard on the hillside. There, close to the rock wall without, he buried the bow of scarlet chiffon.

"It represents a relationship of the soul,"

thought he. He got the idea somewhere in reading. "Is not that nearer than mere flesh and blood relationship? So I've placed it without the wall nearer my view from the house."

Uncle Dan lay stretched upon a bench under a tree in the yard. For he thought that he was too sore from yesterday's exertions to sit up. His hat fell from over his eyes as Bruce replaced the hoe in the coal-house. And he remotely connected Bruce's using the tool with the box which came the day before.

CHAPTER XV

Captain Morgan jolted on to Meadowville in his dump-cart and had his sack of corn ground. Then he jolted toward home with his sack of meal.

When he overtook Camilla on his way to town, he was thinking of his damaged wheat. And as he repassed the place in the road where the accident occurred, his mind reverted to his former subject.

"I believed I was doing my duty by staying with Fanny that afternoon," he thought. "I believed I was; she was so much worse. But the rain came on and injured my wheat, lessening its value considerably. I don't know sometimes just what is best. I commit my ways to the Lord, and I don't want to doubt him, but if I could 've sold my wheat for its original value, I could make Fanny more comfortable. She needs it so much too. Here's Cliff, who already had a large amount of money out at interest, sold his wheat at a good price. I'm not envying him, and I know natural causes are followed by natural results, but I don't understand why things don't turn out right every time when I commit my ways to Him. It's hard!" The cart-wheels jolted over a layer of new rock, interrupting the captain's train of thought. When the short stretch of rock ended, he continued:

"It's just a temptation, I reckon, and I have yielded to it. When God has made His course

plain to me at different times in the past, I oughtn't doubt Him now even if the way does seem dark." He pulled on the reins as his horse set off in a trot down the hill.

When he arrived at his own gate, he stopped and climbed out of the cart.

The horse moved forward. "Whoa!" he called; but Molly, bent on her own course, plunged through the open gate, catching the wheel on the gate-post.

"Why didn't you wait?" said the captain, catching the bridle. "I was coming."

He seated himself again, and as he wound around the grassy hillside to the house, he thought, "I oughtn't to find fault with her when I'm treating my Master no better." For he then realized that he was rushing ahead, showing an unwillingness to trust in his Master's promises.

He carried the meal to the kitchen. And to Helen, who was beginning preparations for supper, he said:

"Daughter, make me some batter cakes, please."

On his way to the barn, he thought, "But my spiritual digestion is not good enough yet for anything except milk." He was disgusted with his lack of sturdiness. "My afternoon's experience has persuaded me that I'm still a babe. I'm not ready for any spiritual exercise except that fit for babes."

After a short time, he went back to the pike-gate to nail on the rest for the latch which Molly

had shoved off. While he was doing the work, he looked up and saw Mr. Cliff Morgan passing.

"Haven't seen anything of my black mare, have you?" Mr. Morgan called. "She got out some time to-day. She's been running in the wheat-field in front of the house, and she's learned to open the gates. She probably let herself out."

"No; I haven't seen her. Where've you looked?"

"I rode down the pike a piece, and up the dirt road yonder. I inquired of several if they had seen her, but nobody had. She may have gone the other way though. I haven't been in that direction. In fact, I never missed her until about two hours ago."

Captain Morgan knew of nothing to prevent his assisting in the search. For some time he had wished to get in closer touch with Mr. Cliff Morgan so that he could try to help him spiritually. So he promised:

"I'll help you look for her in the morning."

"Never mind. I reckon we'll trace her up."

Mr. Cliff Morgan rode on, and Captain Morgan returned to the house, thinking, "I wonder if this wouldn't seem to somebody else that I am so busy keepin' up with the sins of other people I've no time to look after my own. It's not that way though. I have rather waited, hoping some one else would say it to him, or he would find it out for himself, but it looks as if he's not going to. I can't stand by any longer and see him in need of such help, and make no effort to give it to him. I can't do it. I'd enough rather, though,

so far as my natural inclinations are concerned, give him a horse if it would do the same good, and I could do it—'nough rather."

When morning came the idea occurred to him that perhaps the horse had jumped the fence into his field which adjoined Mr. Morgan's farm. So he rode over the place, and found the mare wandering through a corn-field.

When he took her home he saw Mr. Morgan at the wood-shed.

"Where did you find her?" Mr. Morgan asked. He straightened up and rested one hand heavily on the ax handle.

"In my corn-field."

"In your corn-field! I'm certainly obliged to you for your trouble. The boys will have their scouring of the country for nothing. 'Light and come in." He let his ax drop to the ground.

"N—o," Captain Morgan said, "but I would like to speak with you a few minutes." He threw his foot over the saddle and settled himself sideways.

"Yes; I want to say when there's anything that I can do for you, let me know. I'm very much obliged to you for your time and trouble."

"There is something that you can do right away, but not for me more than for others, or as much as for yourself. Cliff, did you ever think that you were a robber?"

Whatever the captain meant, Mr. Morgan knew that he did not intend an insult simply for the sake of the insult. Therefore after hesitation, he replied:

"I never stole a dime's worth of anything in my life. Who says I have?"

"No one. You are a much respected man in the community."

"That's what I thought," Mr. Morgan admitted without undue inflation.

"More is the pity, Cliff."

"Why, what do you mean?" Mr. Morgan asked good-naturedly. "What have I been doin'?"

"There's a difference in God's standard and in the world's standard."

"Is that it? Well, what about it?"

"Are you not robbing God of talents and time for purely selfish purposes? Are you not robbing your own higher nature for the gratification of your lower nature? Be square with yourself, Cliff. I'm not your judge. I have come only in the part of a brother to warn you. There's a time coming when you will have to leave all this. And you will feel bad to be a Nobody Over There when you've been so great a Somebody here. I've been both here, and I know how it goes."

"In your way of looking at it, I'm a genuine slink then, am I?"

"I don't know it all myself, Cliff, but you could come out on the positive side for good more than you do. You could show less indifference to the Lord's cause. You know you could. It's a pity that a man who's as good as you are is not better. It's a pity!"

"Well, what would you have me do?"

"Now, the only way that I can answer that is to tell you to let the love of God sink deeper into

your heart, and become the root of your actions. I can no more detail to you the management of your spiritual affairs than I can the management of your affairs here on the farm. Every man who is tryin' to do right can manage both better than anybody can manage them for him. Of course there are suggestions and helps that you can get from other people in both lines, but it's your business, you understand."

"That sounds sensible. How do you know I'm not doin' the best I can?"

"Cliff, I believe you are too honest to have me think that. Your actions tell something of the depths of your love for your Master. Now I must be going. Your mare is all right, I think."

He threw his leg across the saddle, and rode away. Mr. Cliff Morgan picked up his ax and returned to his wood-chopping.

"The Good Master himself was not heeded every time," thought Captain Morgan as he rode along. "But then we don't know the outcome in every instance, or in any instance, for that matter."

When he arrived at home he followed a strong inclination to go to the house before turning out his horse. And as soon as he entered the front door he heard his wife groan. He went into the room, where she lay in great pain.

"You hitched your horse?" she asked.

"Did you want me to?"

"Well, go for the doctor. Maybe he can do something for me. I can't stand this."

"How long have you been feeling worse?"

"Not so long. I set up a while this mornin'."

"Where's Helen?"

"I don't know. She was here a minute ago. Oh, go on and bring the doctor."

And Captain Morgan rode off more rapidly than he had ridden home. Just beyond the mouth of the lane he met Jim, the negro boy who lived at Mr. Cliff Morgan's, going home. "The mare is already there," the captain said. "Tell Miss Jenny to come over to my house this afternoon if she can; Miss Fanny is worse."

"Yes, sir. How'd the mare get home?"

But Captain Morgan was out of hearing of the inquiry.

The doctor had to wait a few minutes for the saddling of his horse. So the captain returned alone.

When he reached home again, he found Helen sitting on the veranda steps, crying.

"Don't, daughter," he said, putting his arm around her.

"It looks as if mother just grows worse and worse."

"Is she suffering more than when I left?"

"She's a little easier now, but she does not improve. She has got to be almost a skeleton."

"You must try to be brave. 'Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.'" He quoted the passage for her comfort, and drew strength from it himself.

"There comes the doctor," said Helen. "Let's ask him again if there's nothing that we *can* do."

When Dr. Grose was leaving, Captain Morgan walked to the stile with him, and asked him about Mrs. Morgan's condition. The doctor shook his head, and answered:

"When the warm weather is over, perhaps she will be stronger. There is only one chance though for permanent relief, and that is an operation. If we decide upon that at all, we must wait until cool weather comes before we perform it."

In the afternoon Mrs. Cliff Morgan and Camilla found Mrs. Morgan feeling better and talking cheerfully.

"You just thought it was time I was coming over to see you," said Mrs. Cliff Morgan, drawing a chair near the bed, and flourishing a large palm-leaf fan. "That was all that was the matter this mornin'. I've been thinkin' for some time that I would come, but somehow or other I just don't find the chance to get away from home very often. There's always somethin' or other to do on a farm, ain't there?"

Mrs. Morgan twisted her hands together nervously, but Mrs. Cliff Morgan never noticed, and ran on:

"I haven't put up my corn yet, and Camilla there is wantin' to go off on a visit, and I will have to get her ready, I reckon. Helen, you go on out and get some fresh air. I'm goin' to take charge of your mother this afternoon. Captain can get out a little, too, if he wants to."

Helen rose, and asked Camilla if she saw the

tuberoses when she came. The girls went to the veranda, and Helen indicated a heavy stalk on which were several blooms.

"How handsome!" exclaimed Camilla. But she suppressed these thoughts: "It'll do, but I wouldn't be bothered with it, I know, if I had as much to do as you have."

"The strong fragrance at night sickens mother," said Helen. "So late in the afternoon I carry the pot and put it just outside my room window. If you'll excuse me, I'll take it away now."

Helen picked up the jar and went down the hall with it.

"May I go to see what becomes of it?" asked Camilla, following.

"If you wish. Yes, come on."

Helen bent through the open window, and placed the pot on a box.

"You love them, too, do you?" she asked.

"How nice your room looks," spoke Camilla. She could not give truthfully the expected answer.

Helen drew back into the room, and looked at Camilla questioningly.

"I do think so," said Camilla, feeling the meaning of the gaze. "The order makes me ashamed of my room. Where do you find time for it?"

"I don't know that it takes any more time to be orderly than it does to be disorderly; not so long really when I count the time I would lose in looking for things. It is just the result of habit, I suppose."

"Well, thank you for the rebuke. My habits are a different sort, I know."

"Oh, I beg your pardon." And both girls laughed.

"I shall forgive you provided you tell me about these pictures you have pinned up here on the wall. Where do you find the time to paint? Is that the result of habit too?"

"Not exactly; but you needn't make fun of me."

"Indeed I'm not. I want to know about them."

"All about them?"

"If you will be so kind."

"Then, they are my helps to an ideal life."

"Now, I'm in earnest," said Camilla, moving nearer the pictures. "This first one is a figure ascending a ladder which reaches from the earth to the sky. I see you have 'Prayer' written beneath it. Come on with your explanations, Helen. I thought the ladder which extended from earth to Heaven,—Jacob's, wasn't it?—had angels going up and down it. But this is not an angel, is it?"

"Not an angel, by any means," spoke Helen. "It's only a mortal being climbing nearer to God."

Camilla looked around at Helen. "What do you call this one, a big book?" she asked.

"'Study of His Word.'"

"Bright, wasn't I? I might have guessed that."

"And this series of horse studies, what about it? One picture is of a horse galloping off at full speed; another is of a man holding a rearing horse by the bridle, while the horse is about half

harnessed. The third is of a man driving a horse. I don't see their connection with the other pictures."

"Well," replied Helen laughing, "I reckon it's not a fine conception of the subject. But I love a horse, and I sympathize with a spirited animal that has to submit to training until he becomes useful in the harness. I call the series 'Daily Submission.'"

"These, then, are your helps to an ideal life: 'Prayer,' 'Study of His Word,' and 'Daily Submission.' You hope to live an ideal life some day, do you? I don't blame you. I know you must have a hard time. I wish you could go with me to Cincinnati the last of September. I am expecting to have some fun then."

Helen hesitated between pity and laughter.

"But maybe that's not your conception of an ideal life," said Camilla, hastily.

"My natural inclinations lead me to think it is something like that."

"But your superhuman ones do not, I suppose. What a creature!" Camilla sat down on the side of the bed. "Tell me, then, what your exalted side conceives it to be?" she said.

"O Camilla!" Helen answered, dropping down on the floor near by, "ask some one who is wiser and better than I am to tell you what it ought to be."

"But I want to hear from you, a girl near my own age, one who is supposed to look at life in somewhat the way that I do when she looks through her natural eyes, as you call them."

"Well, Camilla, through these helps I regard my daily duties as related to God's great plan of the universe, and try to discharge them with the same faithfulness that I would wield the scepter of a nation, exercising therewith as much gentleness and patience and their kindred qualities as I can command. When I can reach the place where I can do the most uncongenial of these with genuine joy of the spirit, because it is related to God's great plan of the universe, and His great plan for me, I think then I shall be living an ideal life."

"Come on, Camilla; it's time we was goin'!" called a voice from the hall.

"Don't come out," said Camilla, "my memory will wish to visit My Lady in Her Chamber, and behold in her a curiosity of the age."

"But I want to go out and help, you see."

"You darling!" And Camilla kissed Helen.

CHAPTER XVI

The last of September came. On the morning previous to the day when Camilla would leave home, she laid out her dresses on her bed. Then she took her best underskirts and nightrobes from the middle drawer of her dressing-case, and placed them in the bottom of her trunk. She put in a dressing-sack next. Afterwards she folded the skirt of a Nile-green evening-dress, but finding it too long for the allotted space, she unfolded it, and folded it again in a shorter length. Then she laid it in her trunk. She next placed in a cloth street dress. She thought that she had nearly finished the packing, when her mother came puffing into the room, rattling the pantry keys, and saying:

"Don't put 'em in yet. I want to fold 'em."

"Don't?"

"You haven't already put 'em in? Camilla Morgan! I know you have mussed 'em; 'most ruined 'em, I expect. I know you have! Let me see?" Mrs. Morgan lifted out one article after another, saying, "This oughtn't have been put here, and that oughtn't have been put there, and what do you mean by laying a heavy street dress on top of a light evening-dress? I wonder you didn't put your hat in first, and everything else on top of it."

"I wish I could put my hat in there. I hate to be bothered with carrying a box."

"You hate to be bothered with anything. You

haven't got but one hat to carry. Looks like you oughtn't mind carryin' that. I want you to get you a nice one while you are there. Get your cousin Nannie to go with you when you select it; don't just you and May depend on your judgments for it." She refolded a dress-skirt which Camilla had folded.

"What sort, mother? I'm afraid I can't please you unless you tell me. What must I pay for it?"

"Well, that will be owin' to how much money your father gives you." She knew full well that Mr. Morgan would give Camilla any amount that she, Mrs. Morgan, would mention; but, as was her custom, she wished her daughter to believe in the authority of the father. "I 'ud like for you to have a nice one, one that's becoming to you. I can't tell exactly unless I could see; but some-thin' rather tall."

"Something that will make me look taller, I reckon," said Camilla.

"Yes; you are not as good a height as your sister was. She was more slender, and looked more stylish when she was a girl."

"She is just as tall as she was when she was a girl, and just as slender—more so, I reckon. I don't see why you don't just say that I am not as stylish as she is."

"When a girl gets married it don't make so much difference 'bout her looks. Nobody thinks very much about her looks then; and if they do it don't make any difference." She pressed the articles in the trunk with both hands.

"If I can manage to piece out my height with

tall hats until I get married, afterwards it won't matter if I wear sailors or what sort, and people do find out just how short I am." She heaved a mock sigh while she selected handkerchiefs to carry with her. "How delightful it must be to be able to be yourself without any one's troubling over it."

"Maybe you can catch a city fellow, bein' as you won't have a country one," said the mother, laying in the waist of the Nile-green evening-dress. "You have certainly got fine clothes enough."

"Maybe I can," said Camilla, laughing inaudibly. "I hadn't thought of that."

"You hadn't! Then what are you goin' for? I'm certain I haven't worked so hard and spent so much money gettin' you ready just for nothin'."

"Mother, I thought you knew I was going to see what there is to be seen, and have a good time in general. If any young men happen along, I expect I'll enjoy their society."

"Oh, yes, I'm not afraid that you will not enjoy yourself. But what I'm talkin' about is how much good it'll do. If you'd a been lookin' out for anything worth while, you would 'a' stuck to Bruce Turner." And her head went back, and her chin came down over a blue silk waist which she was placing in the trunk.

"Mother, if I'll catch a city beau, you won't ever say Bruce Turner to me again, will you?"

"If he's as good a catch as Bruce; but you'll never do it—not as good a one."

"That's to be proven; and, mother, would you have me marry him when I'm not ready to marry

anybody? Maybe I'll get ready to marry some day, most women seem to; but I'm not ready yet, and it don't seem as if I would be very soon." Camilla selected some neckwear to put in her trunk.

"You could 'a' held on to him. If you never catch his like again, and you never will, don't you blame me for it, for I have done everything I could to make you take the straight stick in the cane-patch." Then Mrs. Morgan rose, looked at the articles on the table, and asked, "Are these all?"

"This makes all." Camilla placed the bow of scarlet satin ribbon beside the handkerchiefs and neckwear.

"Where is your bow of scarlet chiffon? It looks better than the ribbon does, and you seem to think you can't get along without one or the other."

"I don't know exactly," replied Camilla, "and I reckon I never will know." She thought, "It never came back with my letters."

"You lost it?"

"I dropped it."

"Thinkin' of some fun or other, I reckon."

"No, ma'am, I was not!" declared Camilla.

"Well, lay out your umbrella so you won't forget it," said Mrs. Morgan. "Never mind, you are busy. I'll get it."

She took it out of the lower drawer of the dressing-case, and put it on top. Moving the pin-cushion, she disclosed an edge of a purse.

"Take your pocket-book and go ask your father for your money." She picked up the purse and

handed it to Camilla. "He's down about the ice-house. I must go see about dinner."

Mrs. Morgan went down-stairs, and Camilla followed.

There was a long level stretch between the back gate of the yard and the ice-house. A Jersey calf grazed thereon.

As Camilla passed, the calf looked at her, and then ran on in front a short distance and stopped as if waiting for her. When she came near him again, he ran ahead as though he would provoke her to run after him. But Camilla was in no mood for creating fun for herself after so homely a fashion. So she picked up a stone and hurled it with all her might. She saw that she had not hit the calf, but she did not know that she struck Mike Maloney, who was at work on the ice-house.

Camilla found her father on the opposite side of the house from Mike.

"Father," she said, "can you give me my money now?"

"I thought you wasn't goin' till mornin'?"

"I'm not, but I want to be good and ready."

"That's right, that's business. That's like your ma."

"Very like my ma," thought Camilla, "for she it was who sent me here."

Mr. Morgan placed several bills in Camilla's hand.

Camilla examined the money. "Father," she said, "I want to see everything worth while, you know. I want to go to the theatres and one place and another; besides, mother told me to get a

few things. I'm not caring though to spend much money on anything except sight-seeing."

"Somethin' that will do you some good; that's right. I'll go to the house and give you more." And as he walked along with her, he thought, "She just as well have it now, I reckon, and better too than marry some no-account man and let him squander it."

"Give me your pocket-book," said Mrs. Morgan in the early part of the afternoon.

"If you have something you want to give me, I can put it in," answered Camilla, whipping up a rent in her glove.

"Camilla, bring me your pocket-book," demanded her mother. Mrs. Morgan looked up from the waist which she was trying to finish to put in the trunk.

Camilla got up, dropped her gloves and spool of thread in her chair, and went leisurely up the stairs.

She opened her purse, took out a bill, and laid it in her trunk. Then she thought, "That won't do, for she'll ask father." Replacing the money, she went down-stairs and handed the purse to her mother.

"Why! what does he mean?" said Mrs. Morgan, spreading the bills upon her lap. "You don't need all this."

"But then I might," said Camilla, examining the fingers of her other glove.

"I don't know how nice hats sell there, that's

so," said Mrs. Morgan, thoughtfully. She stared through the window, holding a bill between her fingers. "I want you to get you a stylish one now, and look your best while you are there. There comes your sister now." She returned the money to the purse and dropped the purse in Camilla's lap on her way to meet Nina. "Ain't you comin'?" she said, observing Camilla's unaltered position.

"She knows the way," thought Camilla. "Nobody comes to meet me when I come home. I reckon a daughter lays down her good looks when she marries, to take up other weapons." She scurried away to meet her sister.

"Aunt Milly, we's come to tell you good-by," said little Annie, when Camilla stooped to untie the child's bonnet-strings.

"Papa said tell you he hoped you would have a good time," said Joel, slinging his hat to the floor.

"No, he never," corrected little Annie; "he said he hoped you 'ud joy yourse'f."

"Well, that's the same thing, enjoy yourself and have a good time, ain't it, Aunt Milly? Annie, you don't know," Joel said disdainfully. "He sent you a bib or somethin', Aunt Milly."

"Sent it to me?" asked Camilla, surprised that Alvin should send her anything.

"It's not a bib a-tall," said little Annie; "it's a collar." She ran to fetch the present.

"Well, it has a somethin' hangin' to it that looks like a bib," remarked Joel.

Nina went to the foot of the bed, where she had put the package.

"You know Alvin brought on a few of these," she said, as she broke the string around the paper. "He told me to bring you one; he thought maybe you would like it while you were away."

"He didn't?" said Camilla, expressing astonishment.

"Yes, he did. He said you had been like an own sister to him. He seems to appreciate you very much of late."

"Now he doesn't!" And the truth of the situation flashed upon Camilla. She experienced something akin to a pang of conscience, for she knew that Alvin construed her behavior as kindness to him.

Taking the collar and looking at it, she remarked:

"It's pretty; very pretty."

"You could wear it for a bib when you've got on your Sunday clothes, couldn't you?" said Joel. "But all that lace hangin' down there is worse'n a necktie. I'm glad I don't have to wear it. Come on, Annie, let's go out-doors." Joel grabbed his hat and left the room.

Little Annie followed, swinging her bonnet in her hand.

"Tell Alvin he's clever," said Camilla to her sister. "I'm very much obliged to him. I know, though, I don't deserve it."

"I know you don't either. I know he doesn't know you; nobody does but me."

"Ah, indeed!" said Camilla, laying the collar and jabot on the bed. "Am I so intricate a prob-

lem, Mistress Crane, that only the wise can solve me?"

"Stop! or you shan't have my brocaded sash which I brought to lend you."

"Brocaded sash! Where did you get a brocaded sash? Let me see."

Nina unrolled a bundle from which the rich, broad ribbon fell into her lap. "Here it is," she said, unfolding the sash and holding it out.

"Exquisite! I had forgotten about you having that, or I would have borrowed it before."

"No, you wouldn't. I just lend it to you now because this is a special occasion."

"I remember how well you looked when you wore that," said Mrs. Morgan. "You were just about Camilla's age."

"And size," suggested Camilla. But no one heeded her, and Nina said:

"But don't act the fool in it that I did. I had it on when I promised to marry Alvin."

"No, ma'am, I won't," remarked Camilla, dryly.

"She means for you to be more careful about what kind of man you become engaged to," said Mrs. Morgan, looking in her lap for her spool of thread.

"Not only that, but—" Nina observed her mother narrowly, and Camilla interpreted the pause to mean, "be careful not to promise any, but I don't dare to say it just now."

Mrs. Morgan filled the pause with:

"Let your sister see which veil you better wear on the train—the blue or the black."

"Why, the black," decided Nina.

"That's what I told her," said the mother, "but she wants to wear the blue."

"Black it will have to be, then," said Camilla. And she thought: "I know as much about it as Nina does, but mother always consults her when she consults anybody. I'll have to marry to increase the value of my opinions, though my looks won't count for anything then."

Camilla's line of thought was interrupted here by the entrance of her father. Mr. Morgan said to Nina:

"I never saw you when you drove up. I didn't know you was here until the children come down where I was at work." He sat down in a chair by the door.

"What are you working on to-day, father?" asked Nina.

"Why," and he hesitated between a smile and a look of vexation, "I'm trying to fix up the ice-house. Mike Maloney promised to do the work, but he left at dinner-time, saying he couldn't come back again. I don't know what made him quit. I'll have to get out in the mornin' and hunt up another man." He rose, turned to the children, and said, "Are you going back with me?"

Joel signified his assent by running in front, and little Annie said, "Yes, sir."

Mrs. Morgan followed her husband to the back porch. "C. D., how come you to give Camilla so much money?" she asked.

"Well, you never told me just how much to give her," he replied.

"Did she say anything about a hat?"

"She just said that you wanted her to buy some things."

"Was that all?"

"That was about all she said about buying. Why?"

"I just wanted to know if she had anything else in mind—somethin' that I didn't know anything about."

Camilla left home very early. So after getting on the train, she unwrapped a ham-sandwich and made her breakfast of it. Then she wadded the paper, and tried the car-window. Finding that she could not raise it, she leaned back in her seat.

A young man, who sat just behind Camilla, reached over, saying, "Allow me?" And he endeavored to lift the sash.

As Camilla noted the sallow face above the drooping shoulders of the small figure, a look of merriment came into her eyes with the thought, "If I couldn't do that, I know you couldn't."

He saw the gleam, and misread it as an invitation to acquaintanceship. But as Camilla subsequently rested her head against the back of the seat and closed her eyes in utter indifference to her surroundings, really desiring to piece out her morning nap, the young man saw no clear way to cultivate her.

Finally he went to the front end of the car. He stared through the glass in the door as though interested in the oscillatings of the car before him,

when his thoughts were upon the girl behind him. At length he turned sidewise and observed her looking toward him. He next sat down on the front seat and fixed his eyes upon her.

Camilla turned her head and looked out of the window. Then she slipped over and got her face behind the woman just in front of her.

The young man, thinking that perhaps he had been mistaken, took a newspaper from his pocket, and for a time buried himself behind it.

The train sped on.

Camilla moved from behind the head, and upon noticing that the young man held a paper in front of him, smiled at his devised screen. And as she smiled he sought the continuance of the article which he was reading, and upon seeing her smile, he smiled in return.

Camilla moved back behind her screen and the young man put up his paper and began to read.

The situation appealed to Camilla's sense of humor, but she looked out of the window, and thought of her home and of the restraints that for some time she had fought against.

"If I were a boy," she thought, "mother would think it was all right for me to get out into the world and try it a little for myself. But as I am a girl, I must not begin to exercise my individuality until I marry, and then I never can!" The handle of the umbrella, which she held in her hand, fell against the window frame. "If I could be myself in my own way, I wouldn't be bad," she thought. "I don't want to be bad. Father once had a horse which was the best of animals when

he had on his own bridle. He had more endurance than most any other animal on the farm. But when another bridle was put on him, he wouldn't work. He was even known to rear and plunge at times. I just want my own bridle, that's all. I'm old enough to have it."

The train entered a tunnel, and when it came out the young man raised his window to let out the smoke. He thrust out his head and looked up and down the track. As he drew himself back within the car his eyes dwelt on Camilla's face.

"She has a capacity for fun," he thought, "if she's a mind to exercise it." Then he fell to examining his finger-nails.

Camilla saw the young man look at her, but she did not move behind her screen. With unaltered expression she looked straight at him and then at the framed notice to passengers above his head.

He placed his paper before his face and then let it fall, and looked to see if she observed his movements. But at length he thought, "It's no use."

When the train arrived at Cincinnati this young man was the first of the passengers to get off. He met a friend on the platform and shook hands with her.

"Glad to see you back," said May Phillips.

Presently Camilla stepped off the train, carrying a bandbox, an umbrella, a small hand-satchel, a box with two cakes of butter in it, which her mother had sent to May's mother, and a bunch of chrysanthemums tied on the top of the box, for May.

“So glad you got here,” said May, striking Camilla on the shoulder, and holding herself at a distance to keep from crushing the bandbox while she kissed her. Then she said, “Miss Morgan, allow me to present Mr. Howard Tune.”

CHAPTER XVII

On Saturday night Alvin Crane went to the post-office and brought away a letter for his wife.

Upon going home, he pulled off his coat, hung it on the back of a chair in the bed-room, and remonstrated with Nina because she sat up to sew some buttons, which she had hitherto forgotten, on Joel's jacket.

When morning came, Alvin put on his Sunday clothes, leaving the coat which was worn during the week, still hanging on the chair. Now, Nina found a soiled handkerchief in an outside pocket, and her letter in the inside pocket.

As she hung the coat in the closet, she said, "I wonder when it came. Ain't it like a man?"

The man who represented men to Nina entered at the opposite door. Noting what his wife held in her hand, Alvin said:

"I wanted to tell you that there was a letter in my pocket for you."

"You did? Well, I wouldn't have supposed so."

"I just forgot it," he confessed, selecting a handkerchief from the top drawer of the chiffonier.

"Why, you never forget anything, do you?" She remembered the talk about the buttons.

"What does Camilla have to say? It's from her, isn't it?"

Nina tore off the end of the envelope, and sat down near the window. She read a few minutes, smiled, and said:

"Camilla says she got there, bandbox, butter,

flowers, and all. When she went down in the city opposite the big windows, she says, she felt as if she was just beginning to live. It is very pleasant at Cousin Nannie's, but she expects to go down in town as often as she can just to experience the sensation of living."

"Who?" asked Joel. He and little Annie were entering the room. They saw through the window their mother reading the letter.

"The letter is from Aunt Milly, saying she's having a good time," said Alvin.

"Are you glad of it, papa?" asked Joel.

"Yes; I hope she will enjoy her visit."

"Are you glad of it, too, mamma?"

"It's all right, I reckon. There is nothing to hinder her from having a good time that I know of. If I were in her place, I could, I'm sure; but I never expect to have any more good times."

"Why not, mamma?" asked Joel, earnestly.

"'Cause you don't play any?" asked little Annie. "We'll let you play with us 'most as much as papa does." She laid her head in her mother's lap.

"Get away, child!" Nina rose, and pushed the little one from her.

"Run on out into the sitting-room," said Alvin.

"Ain't you comin'?" asked little Annie.

"I don't believe mamma wants to have a good time," said Joel, as he and little Annie left the room. "It don't seem to me like she ever tries to play."

"Nina," said Alvin, when the children were out of hearing, "you oughtn't to give way to such re-

marks before the children. You do it so often. It's not best for them. If you are miserable yourself, don't ruin their lives with it. Don't! Try to exercise some self-control before them anyhow." He strode up and down the floor with his hands clenched behind him.

"When did you turn preacher, Mr. Crane? It's a strange doctrine that what I do hurts them, but what you do does not. At least I suppose that's what you think from the way you have acted in the past." Nina tossed her head, returned to the closet, took out a dress-skirt, and laid it across a chair, saying, "I'm going to church to-day. I suppose you'll go, of course, Mr. Preacher, unless you are good enough already."

"No, I'm not going; but I hope you will learn there something about the influence of a wife upon her husband."

"You *could* learn something about the influence of a husband upon a wife," retorted Nina, taking the waist of her dress from a hook, and examining it. "This is not fit to wear, but it is the best I have." She concluded with a sigh, and then placed the waist on the chair with the skirt.

"Nina, think of the effect on the children of your being at daggers' points with me all the time. They'll grow up, and go to ruin." Alvin stopped near the window.

"Like their father. I don't know what will become of the children, sure enough. I do all I can. There is Annie's dress now, all patched and darned, but she'll have to wear it." She threw the

article on the closet floor to await to-morrow's washing.

Joel pressed his nose against the window-pane, and called to his father to come on.

As Alvin opened the door, Nina asked:

"You say you are not going?"

He turned, stared at her, and then replied:

"No, I am not going."

"Then I'll leave the children with you."

"All right." And he slammed the door.

"It looks as if they would be left to me for life; that is, the training of the higher part of them," he thought, as little Annie wound her arms around his leg, and Joel called again, "Come on, papa."

"What is it?" the father asked, following Joel and thinking: "I am not fit to bring up these children the way they ought to be brought up. If their mother would only show as much concern about the quality of their minds as she does about the quality and cut of their clothes, there would be some chance. But she has never done it, and it looks as if she never will. Who is there then to do it but me?"

The three arrived at the coal-house.

"How many of them are there?" asked Alvin.

"Three," replied Joel, touching first one and then the other of the wee kittens with a stick.

"One for papa, one for Annie, and one for me."

"Don't," said little Annie; "you'll hurt 'em."

"No, I won't. Let's take this one." Joel picked up the white kitten.

"That's papa's," said little Annie, extending her

arms for the cat; "that's the prettiest. I wish it was mine."

"You may have it," said the father, stooping and watching the baby stroke the soft body.

"I wants you to have it, but I wish the others was white too."

"What color are they?" asked Joel.

"Gray. Put it back, son. It's too young to take away from its mother. Wait till they are older, then you can play with them."

"Cats ain't like chillun then, I reckon," said Joel, returning the kitten to the mother-cat. "Chillun don't mind leavin' their mother."

"No; but they do their papa, don't they?" said little Annie. And she caught her papa's hand and kissed it.

"Mustn't talk that way," said Alvin. Then he thought, "How can I help it?"

"May I play with the white kitten when you are not here?" asked little Annie, still clinging to her father's hand.

"You may have it for yours, baby. Papa would just as soon have a gray one."

"No; I wants you to have it. I loves you so much. It's so cute, ain't it?"

"How much you love me?" asked the father, lifting the child in his arms.

"Better than anybody except Jesus," she answered, squeezing her papa's head.

"Except Jesus. Do you love Him better?"

"Don't you know you told us to?" she said, somewhat astonished.

"Did I?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; you did," replied little Annie; "but to tell you the truth, papa, the *truth*, I loves you 'most as much. Not quite, though, 'cause He does things sometimes that you won't do."

"Maybe I can't."

Little Annie looked thoughtful.

"What does He do that I won't do?" asked the father, as he walked through the yard.

"Well, sometimes we asks you to bring us something and you says 'No.' Then we tells Jesus to please send it to us. He does it, and 'most always sends it by you. Does He ever come down from Heaven, papa, and give it to you?"

"No, baby, no," said Alvin, sitting down on a rustic seat where the sunshine fell upon him.

"Ain't he good? Of course I loves Him for it," said she, laughing, and sliding from her father's knee to the ground. "You would love Him, too, if He would do things for you, wouldn't you, papa?" She patted Nep, who had settled himself on the grass hard by.

"Well, He has already," said Joel, who lay on the ground, trying to look at the sun without blinking. "That hurts my eyes." He turned on his elbow. "Annie, don't you try it," said he, as little Annie stretched herself on the ground to look. "It's sorter like sin: it 'most puts my eyes out, while it don't seem to hurt Mr. Sun a bit. He keeps on a shinin' just about as hard as ever if not a little harder."

Alvin leaned over and searched for a stick to whittle, saying:

"Why don't you quit then if it hurts you? And why shouldn't little Annie do it if you do?"

His heart gave an answer of a deep meaning to his questions. "I am by them as he is by little Annie. I wouldn't have them do it, but I don't turn my back on the hurtful and look the other way." He pulled his hat over his eyes and whittled the stick.

"What are you makin'?" asked little Annie, resting her head against the dog.

"Leave him alone," spoke Joel, "he's thinkin'." And he plucked a handful of grass and tossed it on Nep. "He's thinkin' about how many things Jesus has done for him, I reckon. How many has He, papa?—when you get through thinkin' about 'em." He remembered then his rebuke to little Annie.

Joel plucked other handfuls of grass and threw them on the dog.

"Don't he look funny?" said little Annie. "A green dog with a black head."

"Don't look much like that to me," said Joel. "It's just a big bundle of grass with a dog's head stickin' out; and it won't stick out long." He scoured around and threw grass on Nep's head.

"Quit," said little Annie; "he don't like that."

The dog bounded up, shook off the grass, and jumped upon Joel.

Joel defended himself with another bunch of grass, and then ran off a short distance with the dog following him. They played in this manner until the child grew tired.

He returned to the seat where his father still sat whittling.

"Have you thought 'em all up yet?" he asked. "Don't, Nep, I'm tired," he said, pushing away the dog.

"All of what?" asked Alvin.

"All the things Jesus has done for you. I know it's a heap, but I thought maybe you'd had time."

"Why do you think it's a heap?"

Joel dropped on the ground near.

"'Cause he's done a lot of 'em for me, and I'm just a little boy. I know it must be more for a grown man. You see, I just wear short pants now. As I get bigger, I'll need longer ones, and you'll give 'em to me. I reckon I'll need more of the bigger things that Jesus will give me too. What does He give grown people, papa?"

"You wouldn't understand now," said Alvin, evasively.

"No, I reckon not. Annie is littler than me, and she don't understand everything that I do, not *everything*. But maybe I could understand some things if you would tell me. Grown people ask for better things than chillun do, don't they?"

Alvin did not answer, and Joel continued:

"Ain't it a good thing to have a Jesus to go to for things? Ain't it though?" He looked up into his father's face and waited.

"Yes," said Alvin, shuffling his feet uneasily.

"What does grown folks ask for? Just tell me a little."

"I expect you had better get up off the ground, you'll take cold," said Alvin, rising.

"Where you goin'?"

"Into the house."

"Come on, Annie, we are goin' in," called Joel. For little Annie had gone to peep at the kittens.

"It's just as cute," said she, as she joined her father and brother. "I wish all of 'em was white. I *wish* they was."

"You take the white one for yours," urged the father, pressing the little hand which he held.

"No, no, I loves you too much." She withdrew her hand and ran into the house.

When Alvin entered the sitting-room, he picked up his newspaper, seated himself near the end window, and tried to read.

The children played about the room. At length each built a play-house of blocks.

"Daisy wants to come to see yours," whispered little Annie, going to Joel's house with her doll in her hand.

"All right."

Little Annie stood her doll at the door of the playhouse, lifted its hand, and knocked with it.

"Come in!" called Snowdrop, through Joel. "I'm so glad to see you. Have a seat."

And little Annie placed Daisy on a tiny chair similar to the one on which Joel's doll sat.

"Won't you sing some for me?" asked Snowdrop, after a short time.

"Well, yes'm," replied Daisy; "but can't you sing some for me?"

"Joel, it's Snowdrop's place to sing first," said little Annie; "she's at her home, you know."

"That won't make any difference. Sometimes they do that way, and sometimes they don't."

"Well." And little Annie walked Daisy to the toy piano, lifted her own sweet baby voice, and sang:

"Though I forget Him and wander away,
Still He doth love me wherever I stray;
Back to His dear loving arms would I flee,
When I remember that Jesus loves me.

"I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me;
I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves even *me*."

Little Annie turned her head, and saw her papa drop his paper on his lap and fold his hands over it. She said to Snowdrop:

"I would like to hear you sing now." Then she stood her doll on its feet and walked it back to the chair which it had first occupied.

Joel then walked Snowdrop to the piano, placed her on the chair in front of it, and banged the hands of the doll on the keyboard.

"'It was there by faith.'

"What does that mean, papa, 'It was there by faith'?" He looked at his father, who had rested his elbows on his knees and had buried his face in his hands. "He is just tryin' to think it up, I reckon," remarked Joel, upon waiting a moment and receiving no answer. "Come on, Annie, let's sing; or, Snowdrop, you ask Daisy to sing this one with you. It's about 'Ring the Bells of Heaven,'"

"Well." And little Annie walked Daisy to the piano, stood her by it, and the two children sang:

"Ring the bells of heaven! there is joy to-day,
For a soul returning from the wild;
See! the Father meets him out upon the way,
Welcoming His weary, wandering child.

"Glory! glory! how the angels—"

"Children, come here," called Alvin. He thought, "God hears their prayers, I know."

"What you want, papa?" asked Joel.

"Kneel down." And little Annie dropped on one side of her father and Joel on the other side. "Now tell God that papa is sorry that he ever did anything wrong, and he wants Him to forgive him, and help him to be a good man. Tell him, both of you."

"God, papa is sorry that he ever was bad," said little Annie.

"When he was a little boy," spoke up Joel.

"Don't 'member the wrong things he done, God," pleaded little Annie.

"I know you won't, God, 'cause we've asked you not to," said Joel.

"Papa is so good now, God, and we loves him so much," spoke the baby. "We knows you do to, 'cause you love even little chillun."

"He wants you to help him to be good like Jesus," said Joel. "He's gooder'n any man now, but he just wants to be still gooder, God. I know you will let him, 'cause you always lets us be as good as we want to be. Papa wants to be good worser'n what we do, for we'd rather be bad

sometimes if we wasn't afraid you wouldn't do so many things for bad chillun. You'll help him to be good, won't you? Course I know you will."

Silence reigned for a few minutes. Then Alvin put his arms around the children and drew them upon his knees.

"Why didn't you ask him yourself?" questioned Joel.

"I did," replied the father, "and papa means to be a different man from this on."

Alvin heard little Annie whispering behind her hand:

"God, please, we don't want no other man for our papa."

"Papa just means, baby, that he will be a better man," said Alvin, smiling, and pressing the little one closer to him.

"Course you will now after we asked God to help you," said Joel.

He slipped from his father's knee, wet his finger in his mouth and marked on the window panes. He became interested in his employment, and therefore did not see his mother as she came from church. He did not know that she had returned until little Annie said:

"What made you come back so soon?"

"So soon! The service was unusually long to-day. Yes; your papa would let you do just anything. Joel what *do you* mean?" She removed her gloves.

"Why, mamma?"

"Don't say, 'Why?'—marking on that window; you know."

"I didn't know it would make any difference. It makes it look like a lot of little bits of panes, I think."

"I never can have anything decent. Nobody ever tried any harder I know." And she crossed the room and slapped Joel's jaws soundly.

"Now, Nina, that will do," said Alvin. "I ought to have noticed, but I didn't; and the child didn't know, I suppose. If he did, like all other children, he just forgot at the time. It was not real meanness. I wouldn't do that."

"No; of course you wouldn't. I know that. You wouldn't correct your children, but you would find fault with your wife on every occasion!" And she switched herself out of the room.

"We will clean it off son," said Alvin, after a silence broken only by Joel's sobs.

Alvin brought a damp cloth and wiped off the marks, some of which had been made in the form of crosses.

"I won't do it any more," said Joel. "I wouldn't 'a' done it that time if I had thought."

"Well, the window is all right now," said Alvin.

And Joel expressed his gratitude by a cheery smile.

Alvin's quickened ears harkened to undertones in the current of his course that he had never heard before. "Perhaps God means for me not only to endure resignedly, but to shoulder the cross of bringing her to Him," he thought. "If it

is my cross, should I not take it up, looking up at the Father somewhat as Joel looked up at me?"

He stepped into the bed-room and dried his hands on a towel. Then he went to the closet where his wife was hanging up her dress which she had worn to church, put his arms around her, and said:

"Nina, let's live better than we do, more as we used to. I know I haven't done right, but I have taken a new start to-day, and I mean to stick to it. Be your old self again, won't you? Let us live happily?"

"Be my old self! You keep on blaming me, do you? That sounds like a new start. Staying at home here, too, reading newspapers when you ought to have been at church."

"Sometimes the Lord brings right out of wrong; He's done it to-day, Nina."

"Never mind that, Alvin Crane." She disengaged herself from his embrace. "I'm not swallowing any of your pious talk. I told father to-day that I would be out there to-morrow to stay a while. Mother's not well, and Camilla's away. You can be as pious as you want to be when I'm gone, but I don't want to hear anything else about it now."

Alvin left the room, thinking, "She makes me feel like being as mean as the Old Scratch himself."

He strolled toward the flower pit. This the children used as a playhouse when the flowers were out. There he found them then.

"Come down the steps here," said Joel.

"That's our hall," spoke little Annie.

Alvin descended, and then said:

"Children, ask God to keep papa from doing bad when he wants to do bad."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Nina found her mother in the garret. Mrs. Morgan wore a black cloth around her head, a small black shawl about her shoulders, and a pair of blue woolen gloves.

"Why, I thought you were sick," said Nina. But she knew well the ways of her mother, and did not wait for an answer. "House-cleaning?" she continued. "I didn't think it was time for that yet."

"It won't be long before we'll need the stoves. You know I always begin at the garret and go down. I like to commence early 'nough to push my work, and not have my work push me. How are you all to-day? Come here, children, and tell grandma howdy." Mrs. Morgan stooped to kiss Joel and little Annie.

"We are all about as usual. Alvin thinks he's a little different, but I don't."

"Well, don't stand there in the dust; go on down-stairs. Maria, stop a minute till your Miss Nina gets away."

"Grandma, what's this?" asked Joel, waving a long brush.

"That's an old fly-brush."

"Did these great big greenish blue eyes scare the flies away?"

"Oh! 'great big greenish blue eyes.' Do you know what they are? They are pea-fowl feathers."

"Are they? Can I have them?"

"Yes."

"Can I have this?" And little Annie held up a large doll which she had taken from a doll cradle in one corner of the room.

"That's Aunt Milly's. She's been hidin' it from you all this time. You can take it down and play with it if you won't break it. Aunt Milly thinks more of that than 'most anything she has, I believe. Go on now. I want to finish up here before it's time for Maria to stop and go 'bout dinner. You intend to stay several days, don't you?"

"What's in here?" asked Joel, touching a large box.

"That's just some old clothes packed away, that's all."

"And this?" He laid his hand on a barrel.

"That's some more old things."

"Give me this," said little Annie, taking up a broken dish.

"I reckon you just as well have it, for it'll never be any more use."

"Is this a bedstead, grandma? There's a chair with one leg broke, I do believe! I wish I had it. I'll give you the fly-brush for it. *More things.*" Joel looked about him. "I think I like the garret better than any of the rooms."

"Go on, children," said Nina. "Grandma wants to sweep." She gathered up the skirt of her dress in one hand.

"But the clock, how am I goin' to take it?" said Joel.

"Did grandma say you could have it?" asked Nina.

"No'm; but she looked like I could, I think."

"Mother, must I take it?" called Nina, pitching her voice in a high key, endeavoring to penetrate the cloud of dust that was beginning to rise.

"Yes, let him have it."

Then Mrs. Morgan bore down upon her broom, and said to Maria, "Sweep this way."

Nina and the children descended the stairs, and went to Mrs. Morgan's room.

Little Annie rejoiced her mother-heart by rocking the doll in its cradle and ministering to its many imaginary wants. Joel examined the clock.

Later, when Mrs. Morgan entered the room in search of a hearth-broom, she stopped in front of the boy, and said admiringly:

"What a child."

"You wouldn't have let me do that," Nina remarked.

"You never wanted to."

Nina knew that there was a difference in the indulgence, but she only requested:

"Let me help you when you get down in the other part of the house. Maybe there is something that I can do now, is there?"

"I'm just fixin' to put up the stoves. I don't think there is anything much that you can do."

"I reckon I can help with whatever you are doing. Children, you stay right in here. I'm just going up-stairs with grandma."

"Yes'm," answered little Annie. Joel did not hear.

"Which room is it?" asked Nina.

"The room over the parlor, the company room."

I'll get that off my hands first. If you *will* help, go get an apron and put it on."

"It doesn't make so much difference about this old dress. Maybe, though, I'd better, for I'm not getting any new ones now." Nina went down the back stairway, a door of which opened into the dining-room.

As she reached the bottom step she heard hurried movements in the closet. Then she saw Maria come out and disappear through the door leading to the porch. "She's no business in there," thought Nina.

She went to the closet and found the top of the pickle jar half off. "Maria's been into that," she thought. She got an apron from the shelf of another closet in the room, went back up-stairs, and reported her discoveries to her mother.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Morgan, "I know she does such things. But I don't dare say a word, or she'll pick up and leave." And Mrs. Morgan tossed back her head and brought down her chin, as if not to say a word meant more than any person could well realize, unless it was one of her own flesh and blood. "Ever since Camilla went away," she ran on, "she's been talkin' 'bout goin' off on a visit. You know she tries to keep up with Camilla. The other Sunday evenin' I went out in the kitchen for somethin' or other, and there she set." Mrs. Morgan thrust the hearth-broom into the flue, drew it out, and continued: "I thought of course she was gone like she always is of a Sunday evenin'. I said to her, 'Maria, what's the matter?' She answered me, 'Oh, nothin', 'cept I'm

tired of niggers. I done told Charley I never wanted to see him ag'in. If I go out among 'em this evenin', he'll think I come purpose to see him.' You see she has got wind of Bruce not comin' to see Camilla any more. Ridiculous, ain't it?"

"I think it is." Nina picked up a piece of the stove-pipe and handed it to her mother.

"If I would make her a little mad she would be sure to go. So that's why I say I don't dare say a word to her about the pickles. Help's gettin' to be awful. There, give me the other piece of pipe."

"When did you bring the stove from the garret?"

"I had Jim do that this mornin'. Carryin' stoves up and down steps is too hard work for women." The mother and daughter shoved back the stove a short way, and the stove-pipe fell into position.

"Lots of annoyances in life, ain't there? Lots of ups and downs. What was that you said about Alvin when you come in? Let's go 'cross to Camilla's room and put up the stove in there next."

On her way through the hall, Nina stopped at the door which opened just above the front door down-stairs. She saw Joel swinging from an apple tree.

"I told him to stay in the room," said she, as she turned. "Joel," she called when she reached the walk, "didn't I tell you to stay in the room?"

"No'm; I didn't hear you."

"I'll teach you how to tell stories to me, if your father is the pious member of the family," said she, breaking off a switch.

"Tick, tick, tick," said Joel, swinging sidewise. "I'm playin' like the tree is a clock, and I am the ticker."

"I'll show you what you are. You are a bad boy." And the switch lashed the small legs.

"Mamma, I didn't know," he pleaded.

"Don't you tell me that any more." She marched him back to the room. "Annie, didn't you hear me say for you to stay in here?"

"Yes'm," replied little Annie, rocking her doll.

"There now!"

Nina left the child to sob out his distress.

Joel crept back under the bed where the shadows fell heaviest about him, and, down on his hands and knees, whispered to the Throne of Grace:

"God, you know I didn't know 'bout it. It hurt, too." Tapping his breast with his fingers, he said, "But somehow it hurt down in here worse'n it did my legs." And he sobbed heavily. "God, I don't want to do it, but papa told us one time when people done bad to us we must pray for them. I want to do what's right, so God, please help her—help her to be good, God." He stretched out on his stomach and dried his tears. Then he turned over and pressed his feet against the bed-springs. At length he whispered: "Thank you, God. I feel better now."

Soon afterwards, little Annie saw her brother scouring from under the bed on his stomach and knees.

"You done it, didn't you?" she asked.

Joel nodded his head.

"I wish God would hurry up and make her good, so she wouldn't whip us, don't you?" little Annie said.

Yes," answered Joel, sitting down by the clock, "when I oughtn't to have it."

Nina, in the room above, complained to her mother that her children did not love her as children ought to love a mother. But she did not examine her own life to find out if she was in any way to blame.

"You just imagine it because you have to whip them," said Mrs. Morgan. "Somebody has it to do, of course. Their father don't, not often, and so you have to. You haven't told me yet what it is about Alvin. This is such a quick-heatin' stove. Let's move it over a little more in the corner. You know what Camilla says 'bout this stove?"

"I have forgotten."

"She says that it reminds her of a little old ugly woman, who sets at home and sends great, strong sons out into the world to make it a better place to live in. When she's tired and cold, she likes to set here by it, but it's so unattractive she's glad again to leave it."

"That is what Alvin wants me to come to, I reckon. He wants me to sit down in the corner, and just touch the world again through the children. He thinks that's all the right a woman has to the world. I wish you could 've heard him talk. I wish you could!"

"I'm glad I didn't if it was like that. What right has *he* to come down on the mother, I would like to know?"

"That's just what I thought; but he thinks he's goin' to be mighty good now."

"He *don't*, does he?"

"That's his talk, and it makes me mad too. He ought to be thinking about making some money to take care of the children on, and his wife, too, for that matter, instead of preaching to me in that style."

"I think so! I haven't any patience with a man who talks so good and does so little himself. I believe in livin' right and all that, but I want somethin' to show for it; that's my doctrine." Mrs. Morgan's head went back and her chin came down as she finished her work about the stove.

Then laying the sooty hearth-broom in the coal-bucket, and going toward the door, she said, "Now we'd better quit till after dinner."

Early in the afternoon Nina looked out and saw a woman on horseback trying to close the road-gate. "Some one's coming," she called to her mother, who was washing a window in Camilla's room.

"What did you say?" Mrs. Morgan peered through the window.

"Some one's coming." And Nina rubbed the pane briskly. She was washing the windows in the guest-room. "You go down, and I'll finish the windows," she said.

"Oh, pshaw!" said Mrs. Morgan. "I wish she'd a come some other day. It's somebody that ought to be washin' her own windows, I expect."

"It's Miss Helen," said Maria, from the depths of the other window in Camilla's room.

"Maria, haven't you finished that window yet?" Mrs. Morgan asked.

"Yes'm, 'most. I just got the lower sash to wash now."

"You wipe your hands, and go invite Miss Helen into my room, and tell her I'll be in directly."

"I oughtn't to begrudge the time I give to that poor child, I know," said Mrs. Morgan, stopping at the door of the room where Nina was. "You come on down."

"I'll be down after a while. You go on."

Nina finished her window. She was washing Maria's lower sash when the girl came in. "What kept you so long?" she asked.

"I likes to look at pretty ladies. Ain't she pretty though? Miss Milly ain't nowhere by the side of *her*."

"Why, I thought you considered Miss Milly about right in every way."

"About dressin' and sich, she is mighty fine."

"Well, come on here. Mother won't think you have worked very fine this afternoon if you don't get about it. Let's go into the back room now."

Nina did not appear in the room below as soon as her mother expected her. So Mrs. Morgan observed:

"If men was as industrious as women are, there would be less trouble in the world."

A voice from the hall said:

"What's that?"

"Come in, C. D., and see Helen."

"That's what I'm going to do. I thought that

was the captain's horse, and I didn't suppose that he had gone to riding a lady's saddle. How are you?" He sat down at the end of the bureau and laid his hat on top.

After Helen had spoken, Mrs. Morgan remarked:

"She was just sayin' that her pa and ma made her come this afternoon. Ain't she a good girl? I see us havin' to make our girl go somewhere just for pleasure."

"Helen deserves a first-class husband, I think," said Mr. Morgan; "or no husband at all, if what you was telling her is so." He looked at his wife and smiled.

"I didn't know you was out there."

"Yes, I know. It just give me a chance to hear how you talk to my back." And he laughed.

"I wasn't meanin' you, C. D.," spoke Mrs. Morgan, seriously. "I was just talkin' 'bout the men that ain't industrious, or what amounts to the same thing, who have wives that are. If you are so particular, your faults are a different kind." Her fat sides jostled with laughter.

"They are, are they? Well, then, I don't believe I'm particular about Helen hearing anything more concerning them. At this rate, I don't think what you would tell her would raise me any in her estimation." He ran his long fingers across the bald spot on his head and chuckled.

"What's so amusing?" asked Nina, upon entering the room. "Are you well?" She kissed Helen.

"Very well, I thank you. It's your father and

mother who are suffering; they are attacking each other."

"What's the matter with father and mother?" And Nina looked from one parent to the other for an answer.

"Oh, nothin' a-tall, nothin' a-tall," spoke Mrs. Morgan. "Your father is just tryin' to make somethin' out of nothin'."

"That's a right nice thing to do. It might be a good thing for me if I'd inherited more of my father's ability in that way."

"Or if somebody else had had some ability to make somethin' out of somethin', even, and had kept from bringin' disgrace on his wife who does try to do; that's what I meant a while ago."

The smile died out of Mr. Morgan's face. He leaned against the bureau and sighed.

"A girl embarks on a perilous sea when she marries," said Nina; "she certainly does." And she closed her lips tight as if she had produced an argument that could not be refuted.

"Is Camilla enjoying her visit?" asked Helen, hoping to direct the course of thought into a different channel.

"To be sure she's enjoyin' it," said Mrs. Morgan. "Camilla ought to think more 'bout somethin' substantial than she does. If she did she wouldn't a lost the best catch in the country. That she wouldn't!"

"Did *he* flirt her, I wonder?" thought Helen.

"But then we old folks can't have it all our way," spoke Mr. Morgan, with a degree of cheerfulness.

"Then *she* didn't want him," thought Helen.

"Men are so uncertain," said Nina, thinking of her own experience.

"Then *he* must have flirted her," thought Helen.

"Are you very busy now on the farm?" asked Helen, looking at Mr. Morgan, and hoping to be more successful this time in dispelling the gloom.

"The ice-house is bothering me more just now than anything else," replied he, coming down on the front posts of his chair. "I hired Mike Maloney to fix it up. But he just barely commenced it, and then quit, and I never did know what for." He leaned back then against the bureau.

"C. D., move over this way," said Mrs. Morgan, in an undertone.

"I can't get anybody to finish it," said Mr. Morgan, with evident concern for the annoyance, wholly unmindful of his wife's request. "Everybody else seems to be busy just now."

"C. D., move over *this* a-way," said Mrs. Morgan, somewhat louder.

"Why, what's the matter with this? This is good enough, ain't it?" He came down again on the front posts of his chair.

"That'll do, but the other won't."

"Won't?"

"C. D. thinks it's awful if he can't get help 'bout his work. It's all right though for me to rub all the marks off the bureau that he chooses to put on."

"Where's Maria? Why can't she do it?"

"Maria!" Turning to Helen, Mrs. Morgan

said, "Don't you know, she's been talkin' 'bout goin' off on a visit ever since Camilla went away? Help's gettin' to be so triflin'."

Helen thought as she had no servant whatever she must not stay too long.

Mr. Morgan got up to leave the room, and said:

"You'd better let me put up your horse, and you spend the night with us."

"I couldn't do that," replied Helen. "I must go soon."

When Helen was ready to leave, Mrs. Morgan, Nina, and the children followed her to the stile. Seeing them, Mr. Morgan left his work to get Helen's horse.

"I'm sorry about this, Helen," he said. "When I come out of the house, the calf had got through the gate and was chewing the skirts of your saddle."

"My riding-skirt will cover that," replied she, as one accustomed to receiving trials in the most gracious way.

"But he chewed the other side too," said Mr. Morgan, aggrieved, without knowing in what manner to accept the situation.

"There," said Mrs. Morgan, pulling out a fold of Helen's riding-skirt as if that act was the only one which the occasion demanded at her hands.

"It *is* chewed," declared Nina, when the horse moved from the stile, displaying the far side of the saddle.

Helen rode away, thinking, "I wonder if my being but a poor, respectable girl had anything to

do with their revealing to me what they did this afternoon? I wonder if they would have shown their real attitude toward their trials if I had been a person of position?

"I had never thought of it before, but that house is built in the shape of the letter T, and T stands for trouble.

"They all endure their trials in a different way. Cousin Cliff accepts his with despairing courage, and fails, it seems to me, to draw any spiritual strength out of them. Cousin Jenny walks over hers with her eyes closed to the fact that she can get any personal lesson from them. Cousin Nina takes her position toward her trials, holds it, and she would die, it seems, before she would yield it. It's a privilege to see facts as they are. But my visit for pleasure this afternoon was just a visit with no fun tagged to it, as Uncle Dan would say."

A man on horseback drew near. Helen looked up and saw Uncle Dan.

"'Speak of an angel,' " said Helen; "but this time it was but to think and he appeared."

"You wasn't thinkin' of me shore 'nough, was you? What's the matter with yer saddle?"

"A calf chewed it."

"Bad, ain't it?"

"It's owing somewhat to the way I take it, whether it's very bad or not, I suppose."

"I reckon you think ef you set on it like a angel, people will look at you an' not at the saddle. While you kin come 'bout as nigh doin' that as anybody kin, unless it is yer paw, the calf marks

does show, Miss Helen, an' they'll keep on a-showin'."

"Trouble of every kind does, Uncle Dan, if we look at the trouble, and not at what it can do for us."

"You air too deep fer me, Miss Helen; rather, you air too high fer me to retch you. 'Tis a pooty sight, though, to stand on the ground an' watch you sail among the clouds. Is that sorter of a little life-boat what you air a-lowerin' fer Uncle Dan?"

"I had in mind some personal experiences and some observations; but if you're in need of a life-boat, Uncle Dan, I hope the little skiff will serve you."

"Thankey, Miss Helen. Yer paw said to me not long ago that it 'peared like my occupation—fishin' an' huntin'—would give me plenty o' time to think o' the hereafter. I reckon it does, but somehow or 'nother my thoughts 'as never gone overmuch in that direction. You have been to Mr. Cliff Morgan's, have you?"

"Yes, sir."

But Uncle Dan believed that Helen seemed inclined toward thinking and not talking. So they traveled the short distance that remained with the exchange of only a few words.

When they arrived at Helen's gate, Uncle Dan opened it for her and closed it behind her with somewhat more soberness in his demeanor than was his wont.

Helen found her mother preparing to lie down.

"She thought she would see how well she could do while you were away," Captain Morgan said.

"There now, are you comfortable?" asked Helen, lifting her mother's feet to the bed and drawing a quilt over them.

"Yes," said she, faintly, and closed her eyes.

When supper was over, and the dishes put away, Helen sat down by the little table in her mother's room to sew.

"Move that chair a little," Mrs. Morgan said; "the light shines in my eyes."

"Do you want to undress now so that you can go to sleep?" Helen asked, as she complied with her mother's request.

"Not yet. I wake up before the night is half gone, and it seems so long till day. It's awful to lie that way so much. Awful!" Mrs. Morgan put her hand to her face and closed her eyes.

"I know it is bad," said Helen, sympathetically.

"You don't know anything about it. Nobody does except them that has gone through with it." Mrs. Morgan opened her eyes, waved her daughter away, and then shut them again.

Captain Morgan came in and sat down by the side of the bed. He watched Helen as she stitched away busily, and wondered what she was thinking about.

"Mother's trials are severe," Helen thought. "I know they must be. If I were in her place perhaps I wouldn't endure them as well as she does. It's too bad, though, that she just bears the brunt of the onslaught and does not permit herself to

be lifted by it." She turned up the lamp-wick, and then continued:

"Father has accepted his lesson, rather he accepts his daily lessons, and realizes an increasing beauty and strength of spirit from them.

"We are not through with lessons when we leave school. But the world becomes our book, or a very small corner of it sometimes, and God our teacher. And it's only when we come under His guidance that we have any assurance our lessons of life are properly learned." Helen rested her elbow on the table, and held her needle still in her fingers for a minute.

"Is your Cousin Jenny takin' up any carpets?" asked Mrs. Morgan.

"Not that I heard of."

"She took them up in the spring, I reckon. Nina is not goin' to stay till Camilla gets back, is she?"

"I reckon not, but I don't know."

"We'd better get off to bed, don't you think?" said Captain Morgan, turning to his wife. Then looking back at Helen, he thought, "Whatever it is, it imparts both sweetness and strength to her face."

"Put up your sewing, daughter," he said, dropping his suspender from his shoulder.

CHAPTER XIX

Three weeks later Uncle Dan rode over the pike with a game bag around his neck and a gun on his shoulder. He journeyed several miles for his day's sport. Upon reaching the woods in which he wished to hunt, he hitched his horse, and tramped into the depths of it.

The dry leaves of the oaks and hickories rustled under his feet. The wind busied in switching many of the remaining leaves from their boughs, fluttering them in circuitous routes to the ground.

When dinner-time came, Uncle Dan seated himself on the root of a white-oak near a spring. He leaned against the tree and commenced to eat. A gust of wind stirred the leaves at his feet. Perhaps the breezes brought to him these thoughts:

"That life-boat what Miss Helen spoke of keeps a-floatin' before my eyes. It seems like Captain Morgan and Miss Helen air both a beckonin' me to git in. It's a-botherin' me!" He gathered up the scraps from his lunch, and threw them into the rill which trickled away from the spring.

Then he went to the spring and drank from it. "Ah!" he said, lifting his head. He stooped and drank again. "That's a better way then all the dippers and goblets what was ever made," said he, staggering to his feet. "It makes me think of the spring on paw's ole farm—the one I uster drink out of when I was a boy. It's more like it then any water I've drunk in many a day."

Heart-throbs set up. He seemed to hear his

mother's voice, and then a vision of the life-boat floated before him. "What is it?" he thought. "I ain't a-goin' to die, shorely? I'm too young a man fer that yit."

He took up his gun and roamed through the woods. But for the first time he felt no interest in hunting, and so he decided to go home. As he went toward his horse, he saw a covey of birds. He shot several, and then dropped them into his game-bag, thinking:

"Mrs. Morgan 'ud like 'em mebbe. She's nearer death, too, then anybody I know of. I reckon it's all right 'bout gittin' into that life-boat, but ef the Lord wants me, He'll save me in some miraculous style."

He tramped to his horse and rode away.

Drops of rain began to fall, and Uncle Dan's thoughts turned again to the life-boat: "Suppose the elements 'ud force me to take it, or go down? But shorley the Lord would raise a tide and float me in in a grander fashion."

Hail followed the rain. Uncle Dan drew the collar of his great coat more closely about his neck. The horse, pelted by the hail-stones, traveled at a rapid gait.

A barn-shed loomed up, and Uncle Dan rode toward it.

Two men waited beneath, driven thither from the neighboring fields by the storm.

"Right smart little hail," spoke one of these men, Jim Carter.

"Not as much, though, as I have seen," said Ed Tucker. He turned to Uncle Dan, and asked:

"You remember, don't you, when the hail fell as big as a hen's egg? That was in the spring, I believe."

"I remember," replied Uncle Dan.

"I was out in that," remarked Jim.

"You was?" said Ed. "Wasn't the life 'most beat out of you?"

"The Lord don't seem to come to physical relief by raisin' tides an' floatin' into safety," Uncle Dan seemed to hear.

"Got fur to go?" asked Jim.

"Good piece when it's hailin'," replied Uncle Dan; "not fur when it's fair. Don't you know me? I'm Dan Richardson."

"I knowed you as soon as I saw you," said Ed.

"Oh, it's Uncle Dan!" spoke Jim. "I know you now."

"I lived by yer maw when you was a lad," said Ed. "I was some younger then you. We lived in the little house at the foot of the hill, but I expect you've forgotten about it."

"I remember you," said Uncle Dan.

"Yer maw was a pow'ful good woman, that she was." Ed drew a piece of tobacco out of his pocket and bit off a chew.

"What's all this about to-day?" thought Uncle Dan.

"She spoilt you, though," Ed said, with a laugh. "She never made you work none; but you was all she had."

"Whoa!" said Uncle Dan. The hail continued to fall.

"My maw us'ter send me up to yer house fer but-

termilk. Onct when she sent me up there, an' yer maw gimme a big heapin' bucketful, I sez to her, 'Well, Miss Richardson, I don't know what we'll ever do fer you fer all the things what you've done fer us.' I reckon I wouldn't 'a' thought so much about it, but I had jes' got up from a spell o' sickness. While I was sick, she fetched me somethin', or sent me somethin' nearly ever' day. I couldn't 'a' been very ole, I reckon, but I remember 'bout it. I'll never fergit it."

"Whoa!" Uncle Dan said again.

"Yer maw sez, 'I don't want no pay, unless it 'ud be some day or 'nother ef my boy should need help o' any kind. Then ef you'll do him a turn, you'll be a-payin' me back with intrust.'"

"Whoa!" said Uncle Dan, though Ed saw no reason for the call.

"I wasn't much given to rememberin' things," the speaker ran on, "but somehow or 'nother that took hold of me, and I never did fergit it. I reckon it was because I sorter thought mebbe you would need help some day, fer you was a lazy chap." He spat upon the ground, and grinned.

"Whoa!" repeated Uncle Dan.

"I don't see now that you ever will. You air well fixed out there with young Turner, ain't you? But when I seen you come a-ridin' in out o' the hail, yer maw's words come back to me. 'Help my boy ef he ever needs it, an' you'll be a-payin' me back with intrust.'"

"Thankey, thankey," said Uncle Dan, with noticeable agitation, and extended his hand to Ed.

"I ain't done nothin'. But you always had

some clever ways about you ef you was lazy. Wait till the storm is over."

But Uncle Dan rode on.

"Miss Helen, here's some birds," said Uncle Dan, handing the bag to Helen at the door of her home. "I thought yer maw might like 'em."

"That's kind of you to go hunting just for her." Helen hesitated a minute for a reply, and then said, "Come in by the fire. You were out in the rain, weren't you?"

"Rain an' hail too; but I won't go in. I'll git on home. How is yer maw to-day?"

"She is no better. We have decided to have a surgeon come and see what he can do for her; some time next week probably."

"You air! Well, I hope she'll be better after'ards."

Uncle Dan saw that Helen looked sorrowful. Designing to cheer her, he remarked:

"Don't mek yer maw think I went huntin' jes' fer her; but I wisht now I had. Then you wouldn't 'a' showed yer woman natur' jes' fer nothin'; you had to inquire into the matter so pertic'lar."

"Now, Uncle Dan, you might have understood me to mean that I considered it kind of you to bring them at all, but especially kind if you went hunting just for mother. Anyway, how am I to find out just what I really owe unless I inquire into the particulars? See, my knowing is a part of justice."

"Your argument is sound, an' the most of the things you say is sound truth."

"Most of the things?" And Helen laughed.

"I've been thinkin' to-day, Miss Helen—but I kin not talk it out here. The rain it has spoilt me fer comin' in. So I'd better go on home now, an' talk some other time." He turned away, leaving Helen perplexed.

The fire roared in the grate in the dining-room. Uncle Dan sat before the hearth, and Bruce Turner sat in the corner near the window, reading.

Aunt Jane brought in the cream-jar and put it down in the opposite corner. As she left the room, she remarked:

"Feels like winter was comin'."

Bruce lifted his eyes, gazed through the window, and said:

"It's going to freeze up to-night." Then he looked on his book.

Uncle Dan rose, and sat down astride his chair with his back to the fire. He put his arms across the top of the chair and laid his head on them.

A cat purred on the hearth-stone near the cream-jar.

At length Uncle Dan lifted his head, looked toward Bruce, and asked: "You find anything in there 'bout what the Lord 'ud do fer a feller ef he 'ud turn to Him?"

Bruce closed the book, and dropped it to the floor.

"Well, don't let it so onsettle you as that. I

jes' ast ef you found anything in that book about it?"

"No; why?" Bruce tilted his chair backward and thrust his hands in his trousers pockets.

"I don't know. It looks like though the best folks don't git the best o' things ever' time. Captain Morgan is 'bout the best man around, ain't he?"

"I believe he is."

"I 'ud leave have him as a parson any time," Uncle Dan declared.

"So would I," said Bruce.

"An' he gits hit harder than 'most anybody else. He is goin' to git a surgeon to come to see Mrs. Morgan, Miss Helen tole me. That'll cost him a big pile o' money. I reckon, though, it will be a satisfaction to them. It's doubtful, I 'low, 'bout its doin' her any good. It don't look like the Lord does much fer him, does it?"

"Well, we can't always tell," said Bruce.

"Can't always tell! Why, that's as plain as the nose on yer face, it seems to me."

"He was prosperous at one time, you know. I don't believe he was as good a man though then."

"I don't either," admitted Uncle Dan.

"Maybe that's the way the Lord helps," said Bruce. "I don't know that it was necessary for Captain Morgan, but I believe some people can be better poor."

"Mebbe so; but poverty don't mek all folks good by no means. Some of the meanest people I ever knowed didn't have a change o' clo'es to their backs hardly."

"No; poverty alone won't do it, nor riches won't."

"It don't seem to. But there's Mrs. Casey, who is a pow'ful good lady, I think, an' she is 'bout the richest around here."

"She's well off, and I am like you, I think she is a good woman."

"Well, ef a feller should want to step up a bit toward livin' right, how'll he know which way the Lord'll think he orter be hit to mek him still better?" Uncle Dan turned, facing the fire.

"Which way?"

"Whether the Lord'll think a feller orter git richer or porer."

"Have to trust to Him for that, I reckon."

"But sometimes a feller 'ud like to know 'bout what to expect."

"Well, the licks come anyway, don't they? And if a man is trusting in the Lord, the lick will make a better man of him, or help him in some way or other."

"An' when he ain't a-lookin' to the Lord nothin' a-tall about it, you think he jes' gits hit without havin' any cure ready an' a-waitin' fer him, do you?"

"I think it must be somewhat that way."

The cat rose and stretched her back, and then cried at the door.

Uncle Dan got up, opened the door, and held it for the cat to pass out.

"Mebbe you think I'm a-fearin' I might git hit on the side of my riches," said he, as he seated himself again.

"Are you?" asked Bruce, smiling.

"Honest, Bruce, that is it." And Uncle Dan chuckled. But somehow the seriousness in the chuckle robbed the situation of its humor to Bruce.

"Why don't you ask Captain Morgan about it?" Bruce obtained his wares from the best market in trading distance.

"It looks like he has his han's full of his own matters, but I would like to."

"The busiest men are always those who find most time to do anything worth while for some one else. It's that way in everything." Bruce picked up his book and began reading, but the note of seriousness still rang in his ears.

By and by, Uncle Dan moved nearer the fire, and said:

"Bruce, boy, ef you had been hit pooty hard, say like a girl flingin' you over, or somethin' like that, would it mek you a better man, or would some good or 'nother come out of it fer you, you think?"

"Why so?" And Bruce smiled without experiencing a desire to smile.

"Because I 'ud like to know ef that is the way you think shore 'nough."

"It ought to be that way, I reckon."

"But do you jes' *think* it order be that a way, or is that yer act'al experience? I ain't astin' out o' jes' idle curiosity, boy; it might help a feller to know. We hear a good deal 'bout the way things order be, but *air they* jes' that a-way?"

"I think it must be that way with some people,

Captain Morgan, for instance. I don't believe that he ever has a stroke of any kind which doesn't go toward makin' him a better man. But mine—well, I don't see actually where there is any good coming out of it for me. And it hasn't made me a better man that I know of, or that anybody else knows of, has it?"

Uncle Dan waited a minute, and then smiled and said:

"Yourn is not so hopeless as you think mebbe. Helen Morgan is a finer girl then Camilla—much finer. Now *she's* one what 'ud spend money on principle."

"Is that all?" Bruce rose, walked out on the porch, and looked toward the mound of the scarlet bow.

Uncle Dan stared on the bed of red coals, thinking: "When a feller shore 'nough loves a girl, he loves her faults too, looks like. But I don't see why he can't git over it—bein' it's the other feller."

Then he got up and threw on a lump of coal.

CHAPTER XX

"I can't live much longer like this," said Mrs. Morgan. She drew one arm from under the covering and picked nervously at the counterpane. "I know I can't. I'm gettin' worse. I can tell I am whether you all see it or not. Just from one day to the next I can't see any decided change, but the difference in my condition now and that of last spring is very marked. The cool weather has come—the time when the doctor thought I would get better." She stared at the whitewashed wall.

"When the operation is over you will get strong and well again," said Captain Morgan. "Just think of being able to go about as you used to." Then he lifted the small, thin hand in his, and stroked it gently, thinking: "Suppose she does not live through it? Horrible! Is she ready to face her God?" And he looked at her anxiously.

She turned her head, and her eyes rested on him.

"What are you thinkin' of?" she asked.

"Of you." Then he hesitated, wishing to tell her his thoughts without giving her unnecessary alarm.

"I know," she said; "it's all right. It was you who directed me to Him where I obtained pardon and assurance of recovery."

"Pardon and recovery!"

"Yes; I'm sure I will live through it. After the operation was decided upon, it seemed to me there was only a little way to go—with peril at the end.

But somehow all the prayers I had heard you make, and all the things you had said to me about God and Heaven rushed upon me, and forced me to pour out my troubles to Him. The way lighted up, and I promised God if He would let me get well that I would serve Him with my whole heart the rest of the journey. The road then seemed to get longer, and I received assurance that all would be well. Each day since I have known it just as surely. All this seems too sacred to talk about, but I wanted you to know it."

Captain Morgan kissed his wife's forehead, and his face shone with joy.

"To-morrow, isn't it?" Mrs. Morgan said. "Just to think that this is the last day that I will have to suffer. I suffer less already thinking of the health that I shall enjoy."

Helen entered the room. Her eyes were swollen with crying, but she tried to speak cheerfully when she asked:

"I wonder if he wants nothing whatever left in the room?"

"Leave the table; they will need that, I expect," replied the captain.

"There'll be enough of us to furnish the room sufficiently," said Mrs. Morgan, brightly.

Helen wondered at the smile on her mother's face.

"Cheer up, child," Mrs. Morgan said. "I'm the one who will undergo the operation, not you."

"I believe that you are actually looking forward to it with pleasure," said Helen, showing surprise.

"Who wouldn't, child, if they thought they had only one more day to suffer?"

Helen burst into tears, and left the room.

"Call her back," said Mrs. Morgan.

Captain Morgan went to Helen in the cold bare parlor, whose walls echoed as he spoke:

"Your mother wants you; come to her."

"Don't, dear," said Mrs. Morgan. "I know that I'm goin' to get well. The Lord has assured me of it. I would not say so if I did not believe it. Don't grieve. You need your strength for other things."

Helen stooped and kissed her mother. Then she went out, thinking, "Is it because she is so near the other world that she is talking so?" But she was comforted.

When the morrow dawned, the surgeon arrived with Dr. Grose, the family physician, and Dr. Clark, another physician of the vicinity.

While Dr. Cary was laying out his instruments, one by one, he remarked.

"Mrs. Morgan is very feeble. Yet there is no special reason why she shouldn't stand it. It's the best thing to do, I'm convinced. She would just continue to grow worse."

"You think she would, then?" said Dr. Grose.

"That was just my opinion."

"Oh, yes; there's no other way. Hold this." And he placed an instrument in Dr. Grose's hand.

"Is there anything that I can do?" asked Dr.

Clark, going near the table, tying the great white apron around him.

"You can thread this needle," answered Dr. Cary. "Nobody knows what she has suffered," he continued, as he dried an instrument which he had just washed.

"Thread these needles with what?" asked Dr. Clark.

And Dr. Grose laughed.

"With this silk," replied Dr. Cary, soberly. "She's cheerful, isn't she?" And he dried another instrument.

"How you comin' on, Doc.?" asked Dr. Grose of Dr. Clark, who toiled strenuously at threading the needle.

"This is not in my line, you know. There!" At last Dr. Clark drew the thread through.

"You've never done much surgical work, then?" said Dr. Cary.

"Not much."

"Who are these people?" asked Dr. Cary, taking another instrument out of the case.

Dr. Grose related what there was to relate concerning Captain Morgan and his family. Then said:

"Why, you don't try to keep up with the people as well as their ailments, do you?"

"No; but these strike me as being a little unusual."

"Captain Morgan is a mighty good man," remarked Dr. Grose. "There is no mistake about that. Miss Helen is a fine young woman, exceptionally fine, and Mrs. Morgan has suffered so

long. Want this now?" He handed the instrument to Dr. Cary, who held out his hand for it.

"Everything is ready," said the surgeon at length, placing a hand on each hip and carefully viewing the table.

"Captain," called Dr. Grose, tapping on the door opposite, "Doctor is ready now." He went to the bedside, and said to Mrs. Morgan:

"You have such a nice doctor in there; he takes so much interest in your case."

"All doctors are nice. We are always so glad to have them come."

"Well, now," Dr. Grose said, scratching his head.

"No; I'm not well now, but I'm goin' to be. You needn't count on coming to see me any more after this."

"Yes; you'll bury the rest of us, I expect. I've seen so many of these screakin' doors." He took hold of her arm to assist her in rising.

"Never mind," said Captain Morgan, "I'll carry her." To Mrs. Morgan he said, "Just be still." He lifted her in his arms as he would have done a child, and carried her into the parlor.

As he placed her upon the operating table, she closed her eyes and shuddered. Then she opened them, and said:

"Now I know how those Frenchmen felt when they laid themselves on the guillotine."

"Are you all right?" asked Captain Morgan, wishing to say something.

"Yes, all right." And she smiled.

"Don't forget, Lord," she silently prayed when

Dr. Clark put the chloroform to her nostrils. "I won't forget."

Her strength was nearly exhausted when she came from under the influence of the anaesthetic. And through the early part of the night her life was almost despaired of. Dr. Cary and Dr. Grose both remained.

Toward day Helen left the room and passed out of the house to the yard. She looked up at the millions of stars in the cloudless sky, and lifted her heart to Him who had the power to put them there, and gained new hope. The cold atmosphere chilled her, and so she soon returned to her mother's room, where she found her father watching alone.

Captain Morgan answered Helen's questioning gaze in a low tone:

"They have gone into the parlor. They said that all she needed now was sleep. I'll sit here; you go lie down."

She went out noiselessly. As she passed the parlor door on the way to her own room, she heard Dr. Cary say:

"How far is it from here?"

But she did not hear what followed. Dr. Cary asked:

"Would I be apt to find a good horse close? I want a roadster."

"You might," answered Dr. Grose. I heard Turner say that he had one which he wanted to sell."

"That's nearer than Meadowville? Turner, you say his name is?"

"Yes, Bruce Turner, a neighbor here."

"Who was his father?"

Dr. Grose told who Bruce's parents were, and other important facts concerning the young man.

"That's the fellow, I suspect," remarked Dr. Cary, taking his cigar between his fingers, and crossing one leg over the other. "I have a relative by that name up in here somewhere. I'm inclined to think he's the man. I believe I'll look him up."

"I'll drive you up there then in the morning, rather this morning, if you want to go."

"Obliged to you. I think I'll go. Then I can get on home in the afternoon. I intended to have got off on the last night's train, but I decided I'd better stay. I think Mrs. Morgan will get along now by observing the proper precautions."

"We never settled on any price," said Dr. Grose, taking his cigar out of his mouth.

"How about the captain?"

"Oh, he'll pay you; but he is not able to pay you a top price."

"That's all right. He can settle with me some other time. Just leave it alone now."

"That's clever of you, Doctor, but he will want to pay you a fair price."

"I believe I'll lie down a while," said Dr. Cary, throwing the stump of his cigar into the fire. "That's what the bed was put in here for, wasn't it? But I don't need a whole bed. You'd better follow suit."

"Go on. I don't care to."

After a while, Dr. Grose went to see how Mrs.

Morgan was getting on. But finding her still sleeping, he went to the veranda.

Helen came in, and Captain Morgan followed the doctor. "How do you think she is doing?" the captain asked. "I want to know exactly, Doctor; don't deceive me."

"I think she will get along now unless some unforeseen trouble should arise. Oh, she's very feeble, and it may be a good while before she will be able to sit up. It is not likely that she will ever be a robust woman, but she will be much better than she has ever been since the accident. I tell you, though, I was fearful at one time during the night." And Dr. Grose shook his head and stared down on the steps.

"Maybe if we'd had the other surgeon, the one we first spoke of getting, he wouldn't have kept her under the anaesthetic so long, and she might have got along better. She has so little strength left now." Captain Morgan leaned against a post, and Dr. Grose said:

"I think this one knows his business. Anyhow, I've learned recently that the other man has got into bad habits of late years. He used to be considered among the best in the city, and I thought he was still. He does do considerable practice yet. He can do good work when he'll let whisky alone, but he's drunk nearly all the time, they say. So we have done better than to have got him."

"You don't tell me! You know I've been worried for several days because we didn't decide on the other man anyhow. I would have said get him in the first place, I reckon, if you hadn't

thought this one could do the work just as well. But if my wheat hadn't spoilt, and I had sold it for what good wheat brought, then I know I would 've settled on the high-priced one, thinking then that I had done the best thing possible. There it is now! I declare I'm ashamed of myself." He straightened up from the post, and looked out into the yard.

"Ashamed of yourself? You have nothing to be ashamed of that I know of. You were merely trying to make the wisest decision, just what any other man ought to have done."

"Not that. You know, Doc., 'long last summer when my wheat spoilt, and I thought I might have saved it if I hadn't been doing what I thought was my duty, I felt as if the Lord hadn't treated me fair. I did pluck up though and go on, because I knew He had brought things around all right before. But do you know, I worried over that off and on no little. My faith ought to have been stronger."

Dr. Grose smiled and looked serious by turns.

"The Lord gives his people tests sometimes, and that was mine, I reckon. At least it's served to reveal myself to me. You know I actually believed I was of larger growth. I actually did. I, who have been talking to myself so much about laying up treasures in Heaven, and to others about being Nobodies Over There if they didn't watch out. I 'ud be a pretty heir to the treasures Over There, wouldn't I?"

"If you should quit it," Dr. Grose said, "I don't know what would become of me. For your up-

right life and the few words which you have spoken to me at times have done more to keep me in the right way than anything else that I know of."

"You don't say so, Doc.? It's good to know that I have helped you. It certainly is. This experience ought to strengthen me, oughtn't it?"

Captain Morgan returned to the bed-room, and Helen left to look after breakfast.

Then the captain knelt at the foot of the bed, silently confessed his shortcomings, and sought strength and guidance. As he rose, Mrs. Morgan opened her eyes, and spoke in a voice scarcely audible:

"Some water."

As the captain passed through the hall, returning with the water, he called to Dr. Grose, who still stood on the veranda.

The doctor went into the room, and soon saw that Mrs. Morgan's sleep had helped her. So he said that he would drive up home, but would return in two or three hours.

"You had better have your breakfast before you go," urged the captain. "Don't disturb Dr. Cary. Leave him with us."

"I had thought I would take him, but he's asleep. Tell him I'll be back to go with him to see Bruce Turner; we were speaking last night about going. I'll get my breakfast at home. I have to go anyhow."

Mime had assisted Helen on the previous day, and she had come again to help through to-day.

The table stood in the end of the kitchen nearest the door and farthest from the stove. Helen devised a screen out of the clothes-rack by pinning strips of drapery which she had used about her dressing-table over the rack. With this screen she shut off the view of the stove and the cook-table.

When Dr. Cary came out to breakfast, he saw that Helen had made the best of her surroundings. "I knew the girl had considerable get up," he thought, as he took a hot biscuit from the plate which the white-aproned Mime passed him. Upon eating of the fresh pork sausage, he remarked:

"We never get any sausage like this in the city. It's a favorite dish of mine."

As Captain Morgan remained in the sick-room, Helen was the only person at the table with the doctor, and she said:

"I supposed that your market furnished everything."

"Oh, yes; but I'm always glad to get a meal in the country. There's no mistake about the quality."

"This great man finding better things in the country," thought Helen. "I hadn't thought of the country as having anything worth while for *him*."

"You thought then that the city held all the benefits?" the doctor said as if he read some of Helen's thoughts.

"But I believed that some of the glory of the sunsets must be lost through the smoke clouds."

And her cheeks grew pink at having given out more of her inner nature than perhaps the occasion required.

A glint of the sunlight which she praised fell upon her auburn hair as if to reward her by showing the beauty of its shade.

Dr. Cary turned his face to his plate, thinking, "The first circles anywhere ought to be proud of her," but what he said was:

"You prefer the country, then?"

"My home is in the country," she said, simply.

"You are fortunate. Every one is not satisfied with his lot."

"I try not to think what I would have my lot if I had its choosing. The best that I know to do is to try to fill my place the best I can. I know little or nothing, to be sure, about the way a great place in life is filled. It seems fitting, though, that it should be in a great way. And the greatest way I know is to maintain the proper spirit in filling one's place. Please don't think that I imagine for a minute that I reach the mark all the time, or even most of the time. But I think such is possible in obscure places as surely as it is in brilliant ones."

"Easier, perhaps," said Dr. Cary, experiencing both surprise and satisfaction that Helen should have uttered some of the very things of which he believed her capable.

"I'm not prepared to say it's easier, because I know so well the hard side of the one life. It may be true, though, that it is more difficult to employ the trappings of wealth, the luxury and ease which

riches bring, in the development of one's spiritual nature than it is to use denial and toil that way."

"You think, then," the doctor said after a minute, "that every person's chief concern should be his spiritual interests?"

"I think so." The pink in the girl's cheeks grew deeper because this great, wise man, as she regarded the doctor, should ask her that question.

"Suppose a man is ambitious?" he said.

"I imagine that most men of any force are."

"Perhaps ambition will not always permit a man to be loyal to his spiritual life."

"It's an ambition then for self-glory, or some other selfish consideration. Ambition for place and not for character."

"Not wholly always. A man may wish to employ the ends for the good of mankind."

"It's sad that one with so very generous a motive should disregard the will of the Good Master. 'Thy will be done' applies to ambition as well as to everything else."

"Thank you. It's possible to get a clearer view in the country of another glory than that of the sunset."

"I don't see that ambition with a man ought to be any more troublesome than ambition with a woman," said Helen, rising from the table.

"You don't?" Dr. Cary looked at Helen and comprehended. He then passed on out of the room, thinking, "I wonder who her lover is, for a girl like that can't be without one, surely."

CHAPTER XXI

"Was that the door-bell?" asked Uncle Dan. He sat on a bench in the kitchen poking alternate strips of fat and lean into the sausage-mill. A young negro man, Tom, son of Aunt Jane, ground the meat into the tub below. "Faster," said Tom, as the rope of ground meat grew thin while Uncle Dan listened for the bell.

When the sound of the second ring died away, Bruce asked:

"Have I put red pepper in this tub?"

"You's put de salt en de sage en de black pepper in hit," answered Aunt Jane, "but you ain' put de red pepper in hit." She stood by, arms akimbo, looking down upon the meat. "You's put de red pepper en all in t'other un."

Bruce laid the big iron spoon and the sack of red pepper on the table. Then he said:

"Aunt Jane, you'd better mix that tub while I'm gone."

So Aunt Jane pushed her sleeves above her elbows, tightened the white rag around her woolly head, which showed as many white hairs as black ones. Then she picked up a cake of potash soap, took water from the tank on the back of the stove, and scoured her arms and hands.

When Bruce lifted the bar which held fast the double doors, Dr. Grose spoke, and then introduced Dr. Cary.

Bruce led his visitors into the dining-room, the only room in the house, except the kitchen, where

there was a live coal of fire; and the fire here was below the top bar in the grate.

After placing two chairs near the hearth, Bruce went to the kitchen for kindling.

"Who is it?" asked Uncle Dan, holding a long strip of fat on the edge of the sausage-mill.

The question was answered. Then Aunt Jane drew her arms out of the ground meat, and asked:

"Will dey be here fer dinner?"

"I don't know yet."

"I can't git no fitten dinner fer strange gemmens dis day," she mumbled.

Bruce and Dr. Cary settled their relationship as that of third cousins. Then Dr. Grose spoke of Dr. Cary's desire to see the horse.

Before leaving the house, Bruce returned to the kitchen, and told Aunt Jane to prepare dinner for the visitors.

The men then went to the stable, and Bruce led out the horse which Uncle Dan had ridden home on the day of the purchase.

"I like his looks," said Dr. Cary. "Can he go?"

"Go? The truth of it is, that's about all he is fit for." Bruce related Uncle Dan's adventure, and said that it was owing principally to Uncle Dan's bad management of the animal; for he himself both rode and drove the horse without any inconvenience, although the horse was somewhat nervous.

"When I was a lad in the country, I could handle a horse," said Dr. Cary, "and I think I can yet when it's necessary." He went to the animal and stroked him.

Dr. Grose looked at his watch.

"Doctor, if you have any calls to make, we'll excuse you," said Dr. Cary. "I propose to claim some of the privileges of kinship and invite myself to remain here until train time."

"That's right," said Bruce, cordially; and to Dr. Grose he said, "Doctor, stay with us."

"I should like to stay, but I have to see a patient. If Dr. Cary won't come with me, I'll try to get back to the train to see him. I may fail though to do that, for I have a long ride to take, and so I will say good-by now."

"Let me know how Mrs. Morgan gets on," Dr. Cary requested, upon shaking hands with Dr. Grose.

Bruce afterwards showed Dr. Cary over the farm. He took him to see several head of fine cattle.

When Bruce announced that he expected dinner for guests, he dismissed the subject from his mind, leaving the bill of fare for Aunt Jane to decide upon. And she thought of it in this way:

"Hit can't be no turkey dinner dis day. Hit 'bleeged to be backbone, hominy, en sasage, caze I has got to mix more o' dis meat fust. I ain' gwine to have Mist' Bruce comin' back here, axin', 'What you been doin' all dis time?' Ef dat mon over dah wuz a wurker! I dunno what Mist' Bruce keeps 'im here fer anyhow jes' fer me to wait on." She placed a hand on the side of the tub and rose.

"Tom, you hurry up dah," she said, looking side-

wise at Uncle Dan, intending that he should profit by the command.

"I is hurryin'," replied Tom. He turned the handle of the machine more rapidly, and bobbed his head in keeping with the revolutions.

Uncle Dan stretched his feet on the hearth, and gazed into the fire, thinking, "I wonder when they'll come in?" Then he leisurely laid another piece of meat on the mouth of the mill.

"How long will it be till dinner is ready?" he asked Aunt Jane.

"Jes' as soon as dis yere sasage-meat gits grinded up en mixed. Jes' as soon en no sooner." She spoke with an air that implied, "I is de boss now." She put a stick of wood into the stove.

"Tom, rench off some more meat an' fetch it here," bade Uncle Dan. "It's 'bout all out o' this bucket."

Tom rose, straightened his shoulders and limbs, and got a drink of water. Then he brought the meat.

Uncle Dan filled the mouth of the mill, and said:

"Let's work up."

Tom reseated himself on the wooden stool, and turned the crank with renewed energy.

Uncle Dan lifted up great handfuls of the meat and stuffed it into the mill. In hurrying, he shoved in a bone, and this, followed by the vigorous handling of the crank, broke the mill.

Aunt Jane declared that neither she nor Mr. Bruce would have been guilty of the careless, inexcusable trick.

Uncle Dan was preparing to join the men wherever they could be found, when Aunt Jane said:

"Dis sasage gotter to be mixed, en Tom he can't mix but one tub at onct. I got dis yere dinner to git what dey ain' no eatin' uv till hit's all mixed—ever' tub uv hit. I kin put in de seasonin' jes' ez well ez Miste' Bruce kin." And she hastened to prove her assertion by measuring the pepper and pouring it on the unseasoned meat.

"But I'm tired," protested Uncle Dan. "I reckon Tom 'll git it mixed after while."

"Ef you kin git rested on an empty stomach, I is willin'," Uncle Dan heard through the sputtering of the frying sausage.

"Shucks! that nigger needs somebody to boss her," thought Uncle Dan. "Bruce orter marry." He left the room, slamming the door behind him. He wished her to know that her suggestions to him were wholly as useless as they would be to Bruce himself.

He took up a wash-pan, returned to the room, and found that the sausage grease had quit sputtering, and that Aunt Jane had rolled up her sleeves.

"I sees I's 'bleeged to mix dese sasages myse'f, den finish de dinner atterwa'ds," Aunt Jane said. "Comp'ny er no comp'ny, I knows Miste' Bruce wants dis yere wuk to be gwine on." And she moved the hominy skillet to the back of the stove to join the skillet which held the half-cooked sausage for dinner.

"I'm fixin' to do that," said Uncle Dan, as he turned the faucet of the water-tank.

He placed the pan on the bench which he had recently quitted, removed his coat and vest, and tucked up his shirt sleeves about his elbows. Then he set about washing his hands and arms.

Aunt Jane desisted from placing the skillets over the fire to bring a can of lye soap and put on the bench.

Uncle Dan dipped the ends of his fingers into the soft soap and smeared it over his arms, saying:

"This truck'll take all the hide off. Shucks, ef it wont!"

"Dem sleeves ain't up high 'nough," said a voice over the smoke which was beginning to rise from the frying sausage.

"It's cold weather," complained Uncle Dan, pushing his sleeves just above his elbows.

"Cou'se folks ain' gwine to kill hogs in hot wedder." The present monarch of affairs caught first one arm and then the other, and pushed Uncle Dan's sleeves as near his shoulders as was possible. She then released him with the injunction, "Now wash 'em—plenty uv soap."

Uncle Dan dipped again into the can. He applied the soap lightly to the upper parts of his arms, complaining inaudibly, "Well, now, shucks! that nigger needs somebody to boss her. Bruce orter marry. Ef this here hide o' mine don't come off in the sausage meat it'll surprise me. Then the first feller what gits hold of a piece will be

a sayin' that I didn't grind the sausages fine 'nough."

"Tom, is you ready?" inquired Aunt Jane. "Den you mix dis yere tub."

"I reckon this one better be mixed first," said Uncle Dan, stooping over the smaller of the washing-tubs.

"De bigges' one," spoke Aunt Jane, decisively. "Mon alive! you ain' niver dried dem arms."

"What's the use? They'll git all greasy ag'in anyway." But Uncle Dan took the offered towel and used it.

He squatted by the side of the large tub and stuck his fingers into the meat. Then withdrew them, thinking, "It's cold. It would 'a' been mid-dlin' well ef hogs had been made without sasages anyhow. I'll warn Bruce nex' time how he kills hogs with much sasages."

"Dis de way," said Aunt Jane, falling to her knees by the side of Uncle Dan, and expecting his imitation of her position. She laid hold of one arm, and drove it into the meat. "Now lif' hit up, tu'n hit over, en stir hit," she instructed.

"You got too much red pepper in here," said Uncle Dan, sneezing once, twice, thrice.

"Dat's jes' de same dat Miste' Bruce puts in." Aunt Jane went about dinner, thinking: "I done got dat white mon to wuk fer wonst. Ef Miste' Bruce wuz here he 'ud let 'im loose."

Uncle Dan turned the meat about in the tub, stifling sighs, and thinking, "It's worse ag'in then choppin' wood. When a feller gives out at that he kin set down fer a minute in some comfort.

But ef I lean back on my heels at this, the miserable, greasy truck a stickin' to me won't lemme feel decent an' easy. So the shortest way out of it is jes' to git through with it, I reckon." And he fell to stirring in a livelier manner than Aunt Jane even hoped to witness.

Talking was heard in the hall. The kitchen door was thrown open, and Bruce invited in the stranger.

"Laws-a-massy!" ejaculated Aunt Jane in a suppressed voice. "Miste' Bruce fetchin' dat fine gemman in dis yere greasy kitchen. He don't look like he uster nowheres 'cept pa'lo's. Laws-a-massy, what do he mean!"

"I kin not shake han's with you," said Uncle Dan, when Bruce introduced him to Dr. Cary, "unless you be more willin' to risk a slippery han' then I jedge you be." Uncle Dan noted the tall, slender figure, smooth-shaven face, spectacled eyes, and crown of black hair. "There's a mighty heap indicated in the shake of the han', an' I'm above havin' you think that I give a slippery shake all the time."

"I accept your apologies," said Dr. Cary. And the three men laughed.

"I 'spose you don't see sech as this often, do you?" asked Uncle Dan.

"That is why I asked to see this. It's a fine sight. A good, wholesome employment, too, isn't it?"

"Considerin' it from a standin', coated attitude, I always thought so; but considerin' it from a squattin', or kneelin' postur', bare-armed and tub-

diggin', it takes on a monstrous pesky, back-breakin', shoulder-twisten' sorter look."

"When you finish that, you'd better quit," Bruce said. "About through, aren't you?"

"There's some more meat to grind; but not much. We broke the mill."

Uncle Dan appreciated Bruce's intentions to relieve him, but he desired to convince the visitor that he was really not the slippery-handed individual which he had denied being. So he drew his hands out of the meat, and thrust them into the other tub, saying:

"I'll finish the work first."

At this sight, Aunt Jane, in a corner behind the stove, opened her mouth and stood aghast for a minute. Then mumbled:

"Who 'ud a thunk it? Who 'ud a thunk it?"

At length Bruce and Dr. Cary repaired to the dining-room, and then Uncle Dan desisted from his labors with a "Whew!" He said as he rose, "Tom, you kin finish that."

"But I want Tom to mek a fire in de pa'lo'," said Aunt Jane. "I ain' gwine to be scurryin' round in the dinin'-room 'fo' dat fine gemman."

"Tom, you stir that, do you hear?" spoke Uncle Dan, as though the mantle of authority had descended upon him. "Jane, you put dinner on the table right away, do *you* hear?" And he looked toward the dining-room, as much as to say: "The master has returned. I know it, and you know it." Then he made his toilet, thinking: "I can't stay in here no longer, leavin' the doctor thinkin' mebbe I'm jes' Bruce's hired man."

Tom finished mixing the sausage. Aunt Jane served the dinner soon. And while the men were eating, Tom built a fire in the parlor grate.

The Brussels carpet which Bruce's mother had used was still upon the parlor floor. The same mahogany furniture upholstered with hair cloth stood in the room. The same ornaments were on the mantel-shelf. The same pictures were on the wall.

When Dr. Cary entered the room he looked at the large oil painting which occupied about half of the space between the two front windows.

"That's an excellent likeness of Oscar Taylor," said he.

"It's my mother's brother," said Bruce. "It was made when he was about thirty-five years old."

"That's about Oscar's age. Do you know him?" Dr. Cary drew nearer the fire.

Bruce confessed to knowing only the name, not the person.

"He is just the same kin to you that he is to me." Then the doctor traced the relationship for Bruce's benefit. "You don't keep up with your relations as well as I do; it's my weakness. By the way, Oscar is a promising painter. In fact, he is becoming very well known in the world of art. He has studied in Paris several years. Indeed, I think he spends most of his time there."

"Yes; they air mightily on paintin' an' fixin' up their houses there," said Uncle Dan, who had followed into the room. I've been there. It's

twelve year ago, though, since the las' time I was there. I reckon he gits plenty o' work to do?"

Bruce said that the city was Paris, France. Then Uncle Dan speculated:

"Whew! better'n ever. In a place as big as that they must have their houses painted mos' ever' year."

Dr. Cary and Bruce each sat down in a chair by the fire, and Bruce explained:

"It's not houses he paints; it's pictures."

"Pictur's! Ah! You say he's a fust-rate feller?" Uncle Dan turned to Dr. Cary.

"I suppose he is. I don't know anything to the contrary." And the doctor accepted the opportunity to laugh.

"That looks like a mighty triflin' away of time fer a man. It'll do fer a woman to fool with sech as that ef she ain't got no chillun an' she's able to hire a cook. But fer a man, why, I 'ud rather fish or hunt."

"He is making his work fairly profitable," said the doctor. "I know of his getting five hundred dollars for one picture."

"Five hundred dollars! How big was it?"

"About a foot and a half by three feet."

"No mistake?"

"No mistake."

"That beats paintin' houses, don't it?" Uncle Dan laughed at his own ignorance, and said, "I reckon though I better stick to the sausage makin' fer a while." Then he turned to Bruce and remarked, "I'll go down to Captain Morgan's an' borrow their mill an' finish up that part o' the job."

He was anxious in some manner or other to re-instate himself in the good opinion of Dr. Cary.

"No, you needn't," said Bruce. "If Doctor thinks he must go, I'll call there and get it after the train leaves."

Helen answered the knock at the door. When she saw Bruce Turner, she supposed that he had come to inquire after her mother. Indeed he did make the inquiry. And after Helen replied there fell a silence, and during the time she tried to determine what disposition to make of the caller. Mrs. Morgan was too ill to receive visitors in her room; the parlor was still in disorder; the hall too cold to offer any one a chair there. So to the kitchen the guest was led.

Mime was gone. Helen quickly replenished the fire after drawing up a chair for Bruce.

"I haven't time to sit down, I thank you," Bruce said. "I have come to ask you to lend me a sausage mill."

"Sausage mill?"

Helen went into the closet, and Bruce said:

"We were so unfortunate as to break ours to-day, or so fortunate."

When Helen came out, she held up a small package, saying:

"The knives are in here."

"Oughtn't they be in the mill?" Bruce was provoked to ask, without knowing why.

"Well, that's for you to decide. When I grind sausage, I have knives in the mill, but maybe some

people don't need them." She placed the mill on the cook-table.

"As you advise their use, will you be kind enough to show me how to put them in?"

"But I didn't advise."

"Well, then, will you kindly show me how these knives belong?" He stepped to the table, drew his hands from his overcoat pockets, and opened the sausage mill.

Bruce watched Helen place the knives in position. "Thank you," he said, when she had finished. "If they don't work right, I'll know who to blame."

Captain Morgan appeared in the doorway of his wife's room as Bruce issued from the kitchen with the sausage mill under his arm.

"How are you gettin' on with the job?" the captain asked.

"Not very fast."

"You've been interrupted to-day. Doctor got off, did he?"

"Yes."

"Can't do much good when one end of the line is fastened somewhere else," Captain Morgan observed. "Can't do it! That's so."

"Broke down," Bruce said, looking at the mill. "I came borrowing."

"That's right. I hope it will help you out."

From the front window of her mother's room, Helen saw Bruce go through the yard, and she realized that he interested her more than she wished to admit.

CHAPTER XXII

The ground was already white, and the snow was still falling.

When Helen Morgan drained the water out of the dish-pan into the barrel which stood at the side of the porch, the fleecy missiles pelted her. She looked through them at the oak tree near, and saw it arrayed as if some foster mother had sought to prove her tenderness by her lavish gifts.

The snow outlined the other trees. It draped the picket fence which bounded one side of the yard, tipping the points of the pickets, and showing between them in bunches at the back. It filled the sunken ash-hopper. It covered the roof of the smoke-house.

After looking around her, Helen returned to the kitchen. She shook the flakes from her garments and from her hair, on which the remaining particles resembled a crown of jewels.

Helen's life presented a beautiful, smooth surface to the world,—to her world,—but this morning there was ruggedness beneath. As she fell to churning, she thought, "Am I to keep on at this always?"

At length the wind rose, and lifted great sheets of the snow into the air.

Helen washed the churn, swept the floor, and put on some spare-ribs to cook. "Yes," she thought, "I have been sincere in trying to fill my humble position as though I were a queen discharging her queenly duties. I know I have been.

I believe though I could do better things, different things. I just know I could! But why these hindrances?" And she looked at the churn, the broom, and the cook-stove.

She thought then of her mother. So she went to the room, wondering if the fire had burned low, and found Mrs. Morgan sitting in the large rocking-chair with her work-basket on her lap.

Mrs. Morgan was now sufficiently strong to walk from the bed to the chair, and from the chair to the table.

Upon seeing her mother with the work-basket, Helen half forgot her own troubles.

In a feeble voice, Mrs. Morgan remarked:

"Oh, child, I never counted on having to go through with all this weakness. I just thought I'd wake up strong and well." Her head went back on the chair, and she fastened her hold on the little basket.

"But, mother, you are free from pain now," said Helen, encouragingly. "That is much to be thankful for." She did not think of the ease with which the words came for her mother's comfort, nor of the help that she might have got from them herself.

"I hope you won't ever have to know what suffering is," Mrs. Morgan said. "You are so young yet, you can hardly understand what the word means."

Helen looked out upon the storm.

"I wonder if father is in this?" she said.

"He has stopped somewhere, surely," said Mrs.

Morgan. "He wouldn't try to ride through this, I reckon." She spoke more feebly than before.

Helen, noticing, said:

"Mother, don't you want to lie down before I go?"

"Maybe I'd better."

Helen assisted her mother to the bed.

"N-o-w," Mrs. Morgan faltered, sinking on the pillows, holding the basket with one hand.

Helen soon went back to the kitchen.

After dinner, Mrs. Morgan pushed back her work-basket, and listened to the news that Captain Morgan had gathered during the morning.

Helen pleaded a headache, an indisposition that really existed, and went to her own room. There she built a fire, and sat down before it. By and by she rose and went to the window. She pressed her face against the pane as though she would peer through it and see what the future held for her.

The snow had ceased falling. The wind had nearly quit blowing.

At length Helen took her paints and brushes from the floor of her closet. And on a stout piece of cardboard she painted a churn, a broom, and a cook-stove. Beneath these she printed in red letters, "My Stepping-Stones to Heaven." She then tacked the cardboard on the wall along with the pictures which Camilla had examined. And she looked at her work, thinking, "If they are my hindrances to material progress, I reckon they may be a means of spiritual exercise."

Next she sat down by the fire. The piece of coal which she threw on crackled as she thought:

"If I use faithfully these hindrances as stepping-stones to larger spiritual attainments, then when the larger sphere opens to me, I shall be better prepared to fill it. It wouldn't do to be thrust into a larger sphere before I'm ready for it. It wouldn't do." She knelt by the rocking-chair and prayed that she might keep her face turned toward the perfect life.

After she got up she walked back and forth across the room, thinking: "I do want to be like Christ. And what did He get out of life for himself? Didn't He spend it all for others? Yes, if I want to be like Him it will take more than mere sentiment to make me so. It will take self-giving. Self-giving!"

A ray of the sinking sun fell athwart the dressing-table. This led Helen to the window, from which she looked at the western sky aglow with the wonderful pink, red, and gold of a winter's sunset. She thought of the beauty that she saw as Heaven's benediction upon her meditations. She went then to discharge her evening duties.

When she appeared in her mother's room, Mrs. Morgan asked:

"Does your head feel better?"

"I think it does," answered Helen.

"Daughter," said Captain Morgan, "I wouldn't go out in the snow any more to-day. I'll bring in the water and whatever else is needed."

"But I can do it as well as you," protested Helen.

And Mrs. Morgan looked wistfully toward her work-basket which she had left on the bed.

When the work was done, Captain Morgan and Helen joined Mrs. Morgan around the fireside.

As the captain knocked the remaining snow from the heels of his boots, he said:

"We're not half as thankful for the blessings we have as we ought to be."

Helen closed her book. She wondered why her father had made a remark applicable to her.

Mrs. Morgan looked again at her work-basket, and then leaned her head against the back of her rocking-chair and shut her eyes.

"Sometimes we don't realize how much we have until we compare it with what somebody else has," continued the captain, tapping the heels of his boots against the fender. "I can't get those little children off my mind. Six, I believe; five or six. They were hoverin' around the fire, and it looked as if the clothes of two or three of 'em put together wouldn't be hardly enough to keep one of 'em warm."

"Whom do you mean?" asked Helen.

"The McCalls, between here and Meadowville. The wind was blowing so hard that the snow was almost blinding me and my horse too 'bout the time I reached there. So I stopped in till the worst of it was over. Of course I knew before that they were poor, but I hadn't thought about 'em not having clothes enough to keep 'em warm. I wish we could help them some." Captain Morgan lifted his feet from the fender and pushed back his chair.

Helen looked on her book again, but she did not read.

Mrs. Morgan only sighed.

After a while, Captain Morgan said:

"I wonder if there is not some way or other that we can help them?"

"None that I know of," Mrs. Morgan said.

"I tell you," said the captain, turning to his wife, "I'm so thankful that you are getting well that I feel as if I must show my appreciation of it to the Lord in every way that I can."

"It's so slow," said Mrs. Morgan.

"It is slow, but then you are so much better than you were."

"Yes," admitted Mrs. Morgan.

"It's all right to feel thankful over things; we ought, to be sure. But then we ought to do things to show that we are thankful."

"I am thankful," said Mrs. Morgan; "but what can we do? I don't know of anything. They are livin' on Mr. Graham's place. It looks like he is the one to help them if they need it."

"Perhaps he is doing all for them that he can. I don't know. Whether he is or not, them children are suffering. And maybe after all it's no more his business than mine. We ought to look at the need and what we are doing to relieve it. Surely there is such a thing as making a way if I'm as serious as I believe I am." Captain Morgan remained silent for a time, and then he said:

"Daughter, pass me the Book; we will have our evening worship now." He read the second chapter of James. When he had finished, he re-read these verses;

“ ‘If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

“ ‘And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit?

“ ‘Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.’ ”

Then he turned to the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew and read:

“ ‘For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“ ‘Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“ ‘Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“ ‘When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“ ‘Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“ ‘And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

“ ‘Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

“ ‘For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

“ ‘I was a stranger, and ye took me not in:

naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

“Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

“Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me.

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Captain Morgan and Helen knelt, and in his petition the captain said:

“O Lord, you know me and I know you. When I say I want to get some warm clothes for these little children, you know I mean it. When I tell you that I don’t know of a dollar that I can spare to spend for them, you know I’m honest. Won’t you show me where to get the clothes if you think I ought to give ’em to the children?”

After the prayer, Helen withdrew to her own room.

Mrs. Morgan then said:

“Father, my shawl didn’t cost as much as you left with me. When Helen brought it home, she put the rest of the money in the table drawer; maybe you might use that for the children.”

“Why, that’s some of the money that I had laid by to pay Dr. Cary with, but he refused to take it, you know. I paid the other bills out of it, and gave you what was left so you could make yourself more comfortable. It’s yours.”

"I don't know that I really need anything else now. So maybe you had better just use it that way."

Helen opened a box on her dressing-table, counted out a few pieces of silver, quoting:

"'Study to shew thyself approved unto God.'"
Then she closed the box, thinking: "My real purpose for hoarding this money for which I sold the eggs was to show myself approved unto man. But I never thought of it exactly in that way before. Now I will give this, and just make over my old dress the best I can."

She carried the money to her father, and Captain Morgan said:

"If we try to answer our own prayers, the Lord will help us."

CHAPTER XXIII

One morning in the latter part of winter, Uncle Dan took his gun and sauntered forth. While going through a strip of woods near home, he fired into a covey of birds, but succeeded only in scattering them. Farther on a squirrel darted up a tree, ran out on a limb, and seated itself with its bushy tail for background. Uncle Dan watched the movements of the small animal until he perceived that the time was opportune. He then pulled the trigger and the deed was done. He pocketed his game and wandered through the woods. When he came to the edge, he saw Captain Morgan at a distance.

He then crossed a stubble-field, and found the captain hauling out fodder for his stock.

"Cold work, ain't that, fer this mornin'?" asked Uncle Dan.

"Pretty cold," answered the captain. "It won't do though to wait on the weather; the stock would suffer. I've just been thinkin'." He pulled on the line, stopping his horse.

"Thinkin'? What you thinkin', 'bout, Captain? Somethin' good, I reckon." Uncle Dan rested the end of his gun on the frozen ground.

"I've just been thinkin' 'bout the different ways God's people work. Some toil early and late, through heat and through cold. Some work in fair weather, but not under unfavorable conditions. And some even say they didn't know they

were meant. And our Lord has given His command to all who would follow Him."

"Ever' one of 'em?" asked Uncle Dan.

"Every one of His own."

"An' them what ain't Hisn, what about it?"

"Well, what about it sure enough," said Captain Morgan, pushing the fingers of his heavy gloves closer to his hands. "They ought to become His, oughtn't they?"

"I don't know," said Uncle Dan, soberly. "I don't know. I've been wantin' to talk to you, Captain, but ef follerin' the Lord means work, I reckon I jes' about as well leave it be."

"The Lord will help you with what He would have you do. Everybody doesn't have to work in exactly the same way. You'll have to ask the Lord to show you what He would have you do. And He'll impress that on you, and show you in one way and another. Prayer and following the dictates of the Holy Spirit is the secret of the Christian life. It's some's duty to work in one field and some's to work in another. I don't believe it's anybody's duty to neglect the fields nearest to them—the fields of their own homes."

"But then you know I've n-e-v-e-r been what you, what some 'ud call a specially active man, an I'm feered I, I jes' couldn't work at nothin', that's it." And Uncle Dan leaned heavily on his gun.

The best thing would be just to give up yourself to the Lord and let Him see what He could do with you."

"I'm feered it's a bad showin', Captain; bad showin'. Ef He 'ud put me to haulin' out fodder,

say, on a cole, frosty mornin', I 'ud give up, I'm sure I would. When a man's lived to my age an' never done nothin' 'tall, then talk 'bout puttin' him to any kind o' work, it won't do. I've seen things ef I haven't never done nothin'." Uncle Dan lifted his gun and put it down on the ground in a different place.

"When the Lord is backin' a man he can do a heap of things that he could never do by himself."

"Mebbe ef he didn't want to do nothin' *hard* ef he did have the backin', what about that?"

"If he's got a full amount of the backing, he'll want to do whatever the Lord wants him to, whether it is to work hard in one way or another, or just to be patient and wait."

"Ef I wasn't feered the Lord would call on me fer hard things. Ef I was like you, Captain. There ain't many though what is."

"Oh, I don't set myself up to be one of the first ones. I'm just tryin' to do the best I know. Sometimes it seems I must be sorter a hypocrite, for you and a few others think I'm better than I am, I believe."

"No; you don't fool me, an' you don't fool nobody else as I know of. People in general ain't so easy fooled as some folks seem to think they air. It don't mek so much difference 'bout how good you claim to be, it's how good you air that people count on."

"Claims alone don't amount to anything. They help if they are backed by a determination."

"But what good would it do fer me to claim to belong to the Lord unless I 'ud live up to it by

doin' what He would want me to do? An' I'm feered it would be work. Captain, you know me. It ain't no use o' me beatin' round the stump to you 'bout myse'f, fer you know I wouldn't work at nothin'. I was jes' born lazy, I reckon. Other folks know 'bout it, an' I know it, though I ain't so plain spoken very often myse'f. Ef I was sure of a easy, settin'-round job, then I might talk about it."

"You can rest assured that the Lord won't give you anything that you can't do with His help. But here, we have got to go somewhere some time; you know it, and I know it. Think of those who have gone on before us; your time will come, and my time. Suppose you *should* get into Heaven without having done anything at all for the Lord, you wouldn't want all the saints there lookin' down on you, would you?"

"They wouldn't do that way there, would they?"

"I reckon not. But what right do you think you would have to be looked up to when you hadn't laid up any treasures of any kind there? Don't you see, you 'ud be a Nobody Over There?"

"You think then a feller couldn't invite hisse'f to all their big dinners an' other doin's what they have there, do you? No easy-goin', lucky fellers there?"

"But if you will let the Lord take full possession of you, He can change you so that you will want to strike even hard licks for Him."

"Now, Captain, I've been tryin' to take in ever'-thing you've said. But when you tell me I kin be made to *want* to strike hard licks, I tell you

honest, I can't swaller it. I haven't been livin' with myse'f all these years an' not found that out." Uncle Dan shouldered his gun, and turned away.

"Hold on!" called Captain Morgan, dropping his line and following. "The Lord is powerful, don't you know? He's all-powerful. He can help you do whatever He thinks you ought to do. Give Him your heart while there is yet time."

Uncle Dan looked startled. "While there is yet time," he thought. "You thinkin' 'bout that too?" But he said:

"Captain, I've hindered you in yer work, an' it's cole. I'll walk on to the house, an' set a while with Mrs. Morgan an' Miss Helen."

Captain Morgan returned to his hauling, with a prayer in his heart. "When one wants to do for the Lord, opportunities often present themselves," he thought. "But did I say just what I should have said? I did the best I knew. So I'll leave the results with the Lord. The good don't come by me, only through me."

When he went to the house he asked Mrs. Morgan how long Uncle Dan stayed.

"Only a short time," she answered. "Did you know he was here?"

"I was talkin' with him up in the field," the captain said, as he sat down by the fire to warm. "He told me he was coming."

"He didn't have much to say this mornin'," said Mrs. Morgan. "He is usually goin' on with some fun or other, but he looked like he was sorter studyin'. He brought me a squirrel."

Helen entered at the hall door, carrying a dress across her arm.

"What are you goin' to do?" asked Mrs. Morgan. She observed Helen sweep the mantelpiece with a look, and then open the table drawer and take out of it a penknife.

"I thought I 'ud rip this up, wash it, and turn it," answered Helen. "I think I can improve its appearance."

Mrs. Morgan stepped over the line into her one-time land of prosperity, and stood for a second with the question just unasked, "Why not go along and get you a new one?" But Captain Morgan lifted Mrs. Morgan back within the borders of adversity, by saying:

"You show wisdom, daughter, by spending your money in the way it will count for the most."

"Wisdom?" said Mrs. Morgan, with her feet firmly planted on the land which she now recognized as her own. "I call it necessity." She laid down a piece of needle-work to clutch the workbasket on her lap.

"Necessity, though, may be used as a means to wisdom, and no doubt daughter realizes that," said Captain Morgan. And then he thought: "If I had made her keep what I let her spend in the Lord's cause, she might gratify her tastes. I would like for her to gratify her tastes, but I know the other will do her more good. I don't care much about many things any more for myself, but I would like to have more things and better things for my family." And he lifted his heart in prayer: "O Lord, you know I wouldn't take

back anything. I wouldn't have them do it. But help my thoughts. May even my thoughts go to the credit side."

Mrs. Morgan looked at Helen and asked:

"Is Uncle Dan goin' somewhere else to hunt to-day? I heard him talkin' to you at the door. I thought maybe he told you."

"He said he was going on home," Helen answered, as she sat down in a chair by the window. She opened the knife which she held in her hand, thinking: "Poor Uncle Dan! I believe he thinks he's going to die soon."

When Uncle Dan reached home he saw that the door of a building in the yard stood open. Apples were stored here. He went in, expecting to find Bruce. And Bruce was on his knees, sorting out the bad apples and throwing them into a feed basket.

"Why you back?" asked he, looking up and observing Uncle Dan stand his gun in a corner.

"I b'lieve I'd rather hang round you to-day, boy." Uncle Dan stooped over the apples near Bruce.

"All right."

Uncle Dan began picking up the rotten apples and throwing them into the basket.

"Luck fail you to-day?" asked Bruce.

"Luck was 'bout the same. I shot one squirrel."

"Did you run upon a snag then? I told you you'd better ride."

"Ah, boy, you know me too, don't you? That's jes' a different way o' sayin' you knowed I was too

lazy to go ver'y fur. I did run on a snag, but the snag was Captain Morgan. The water run in an' beat agin the ole weak place in the boat. Then Miss Helen she come 'long with the putty of her pooty-soundin' words, an' tried to patch up the snagged place. But the putty wouldn't stick, fer the water what Captain Morgan had started in kep' surgin' through. The boat is goin' down, boy; the ole boat is goin' to sink." Uncle Dan laid his face on his arms and his frame shook with sobs.

Bruce took his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his forehead. Then he picked up a handful of the decayed fruit and dropped it into the basket. Wishing to relieve Uncle Dan in some way, at length Bruce said:

"Go in by the fire and let me send for the doctor."

"I don't need no doctor," said Uncle Dan, shaking his head, sobbing like a child. "He ain't what I need. I don't know what I need, but I'm goin' to be lost, boy! I'm goin' to be lost."

"Captain Morgan has just scared you, that's all. Why, be braver than that. Captain is a good man, but sometimes he does talk like old Satan was 'bout to nab a fellow. Come on and help me with the apples. Here's a basketful ready to carry out. I've been emptyin' them on the hillside yonder. Take this down there now, won't you?"

Uncle Dan rose slowly. He was like one watching from prison walls the sports of others, knowing that he could never again participate in them. He tottered out of the room with the basket, and

down near the graveyard on the hillside, emptied it.

Bruce worked on industriously. He thought of sending other basketfuls by Uncle Dan. But upon the suggestion, Uncle Dan said:

"Boy, it only meks me think o' the way the good an' the bad'll be separated. It meks me think o' myse'f bein' tumbled out to go to destruction, while Captain Morgan and Miss Helen will be safe somewhere else like the good apples."

"Don't take them," said Bruce. "This is about the last anyhow."

Uncle Dan squatted by Bruce, and after a short time said:

"Boy, won't you, won't you p-u-t me, won't you gimme that upper corner yonder, the one what looks toward the woods an' the crick? Won't you lay me there when the time comes? An', boy, ef I could jes' think o' you an' Helen comin' there together sometimes, an' puttin' flowers on my grave! By an' by bringin' yer little chillun with you, an' lettin' them plant some lilies-of-the-valley, holly-hocks, an' tiger-lilies, fer all them grewed in my mother's garden out on the ole farm where the spring was, an' tellin' the chillun that Uncle Dan would 'a' loved them as he loved their father an' mother, it seems like it wouldn't be so hard to lay there an' rot—like the apples."

Bruce wiped his forehead again, and Uncle Dan continued:

"Tell 'em, boy, that when Uncle Dan was young like them he wasn't bad. He had only one spot on him like some of these apples started with, but

it spread an' it spread. Let it be a warnin' to them. 'Tell 'em I would 'a' been better at the las' ef I could, but I was too fur gone; I knowed it couldn't be. An', boy, ef you kin think o' anything to tell 'em 'bout me before the spot clean covered me, I wisht you would. Fer I 'ud like fer 'em to love me as much as they kin.'" And Uncle Dan sobbed on his arm.

Bruce wiped his brow. Then he rose and carried the basket to the hillside, and put it down.

The ground was thawed where the sun fell upon it. But in sheltered places there was ice still.

Bruce looked at the frozen earth above the scarlet bow, thinking that the vacancy in his heart could never be filled. Then he emptied the basket, swung it over his arm, and walked up the hill.

CHAPTER XXIV

As Mrs. Morgan plucked the red blooms from the honeysuckles in the front yard, the soft breezes of early summer stole in and out among the vines and fanned her gray hair about her temples. She caught a stem in the breast-pin at her throat, fastening the bright flower against the bosom of her white wrapper. Then she reached for other blooms to add to those in her hand.

There was evidence of renewed life around her. The oak-leaves were tender. The grass on the lawn was green.

She looked out over the meadow which the sun shone upon. And as she looked an arm encircled her waist, and a voice said:

"Mother, it's good to see you going about in your old way. Are the flowers for the breakfast-table?"

"Yes; but 'mother' seems so old. I feel so young and glad to-day; can't you call me by some other name? Sickness seems almost worth while for the experience of getting well. You have no idea how delightful it is, and I can't tell you."

The arm drew her a little closer, and the voice spoke in tones a little more mellow:

"I'm glad; you don't know how glad, and I can't tell you. It makes me feel young again too, because it seems almost as if I were talking to Fanny of the long ago, the one who was my sweetheart. So *Sweetheart* it will have to be to-day instead of *mother*, won't it?" He kissed the gray

hair, and touched his lips to the bloom at his wife's throat.

The breezes carried some loose strands of hair against his face. As he stroked them back, he looked over her head away to the meadow, but his mind's eye dwelt on the many meadows of experiences that they had harvested together.

"Perhaps we had better go in," Mrs. Morgan said after a while; "Helen will be waiting for us."

The pair turned toward the house. They were, though, companions of the march who had lost step. He kept time, as was his custom, to the lofty tune of duty. But she listened to the many melodies about her, and fell behind in the march.

"Mother, take the honeysuckles in the room," Helen said, when the three had risen from the breakfast-table.

"Then I will come back and wipe the dishes for you," said Mrs. Morgan, carrying away the flowers.

"Just stay there," Helen called. "You will be too tired to go to-day."

Helen prevented her mother assisting in any except the lightest of the household duties. And in spite of her resolutions while she lay abed, Mrs. Morgan dreaded the drudgery. So as usual she obeyed Helen's commands. She placed the tumbler with the honeysuckles on the little table, and thought of her trip to meeting with her husband and daughter. She had not gone since her illness, and after a short time she began her preparations with a girlish interest in her apparel.

She put on a gown which Helen's deft fingers

had altered for the occasion. She then tied on her dress-bonnet, and brought a honeysuckle. But the sight of her gray hair prevented her fastening on the flower.

Her hair was parted in the middle and lay in waves along the front and sides of her head like the tiniest edges of the billows on the surging sea.

While she straightened the black velvet loops of the bow, she looked alternately at the bloom on the shelf below the mirror and at her gray hair.

Captain Morgan thrust his head within the doorway, and asked:

"Are you ready? It's time we were off."

Then her agitation revealed itself in the reply, which was:

"Every man ought to have a woman's dress to put on just once in his life, and then he would learn some patience."

"I never meant to be impatient," said the captain, humbly, advancing toward his wife. "I'm too glad you can go with me to-day for that. How well you do look, mother."

Mrs. Morgan looked at the honeysuckle, the blossom of the old vine which she had plucked but to wither, and longed for the fulfillment of her new desires that had come with her strength. Later, when she got into the old carriage, and it rattled its dry, paintless spokes over the pike, her discontent was manifested in her words:

"This carriage ought to be painted and fixed up unless we throw it aside altogether. It's frightful for a body to ride in. What will people say?"

Captain Morgan struck the horse with the lines, making him trot until he came to a hill, thinking, "Fanny's been sick so long, it's natural for her to compare the way we go now with the style we used to go in."

Helen remarked:

"There comes some one, who is it?"

Several long fishing-rods extended out of the back of the approaching buggy. When Uncle Dan stopped, he said:

"Why, Mrs. Morgan, you goin' to-day? I'm a notion to turn round an' go back myse'f. But you wouldn't lemme set in the pew with you with my fishin' clothes on, would you?"

"Yes, we would," said the captain. "Come along."

"I'm jes' talkin', Captain. It wouldn't be no use nohow, fer I wouldn't ketch nothin' there no more then I ketched fish on the trip."

"How long have you been gone?" asked Mrs. Morgan.

"I jes' went day before yestiddy. Well, it sorter looks like ole times to see you drivin' out."

Mrs. Morgan laid her arm along the back of the seat to hide a rent in the cloth. Uncle Dan continued:

"Miss Helen, she's growed up more of a woman though since then. I declare, Mrs. Morgan, ef it wasn't fer yer gray hair, you 'ud look as young as Miss Helen does. People 'ud take you to be sisters anyhow ef they didn't know no better."

Mrs. Morgan again thought of her desire to live life over in a measure, and said:

"It don't look like just the color of a body's hair ought to have anything to do with it, does it?"

"You hear that, Captain? I expect the captain could tell you that that bald spot on his head made him feel ole before his time; couldn't you, Captain?"

"I don't know that it did," replied Captain Morgan; "but I believe it made people feel toward me as if I were older than I was."

"That amounts to 'bout the same thing, don't it? People looked on you as bein' ole, an' then you had to think o' yerse'f as you knowed they thought o' you, so you 'ud be able to meet their requirements of you. I kin jedge from my own experience. My head it ain't bald, an' my hair it ain't gray, but people think o' me in jes' sech a way." Uncle Dan struck his fishing-rods with his foot, and then said, "People think I'm onery, an' I have to think so my'sef so I'll know how to act toward them."

"You are not obliged to," said the captain.

"Yes, sir, I am; fer it's jes' that a-way."

"But if you were different, people wouldn't think you were onery, you see, an' you wouldn't have to think so yourself."

"Now, Captain, yer head it got bald, an' yer head it stayed bald, an' you knowed it was bald. Mrs. Morgan her hair it turned white when some ladies of her age was still a wearin' their colored hair; it'll stay white, an' Mrs. Morgan she knows

it will. I have been—well, I've been that all my life, an' I know I'll stay jes' that a-way."

"You haven't stayed just where you were, though," said the captain.

"But, Captain, it ain't no less than it was. I know that too."

"You can change from bad to worse, and the Lord can change you from bad to good."

"Not when a feller knows he's clean done gone. I wisht I could b'lieve you, Captain. I went a fishin', Bruce said fer me to try the ole charmer, but she wouldn't work. I couldn't take no heart in ketchin' the fish, nor in the tryin' of it either. But then I won't keep you all away from yer meetin'. I'm pow'ful glad to see you out, Mrs. Morgan. I tell you honest, though, I never expected to see the like of it again. I never did."

"The Lord can do wonderful things, Uncle Dan," said Captain Morgan; "He can, that He can."

"Sometimes, I reckon," said Uncle Dan. Then he tapped his horse with his whip, and drove on.

"Poor fellow!" said Captain Morgan, as he urged his horse forward.

"Poor Uncle Dan!" said Helen.

"What's the matter with him, anyhow?" asked Mrs. Morgan, dropping her hand from the back of the seat.

"He thinks the Lord can't save anybody as no account as he is," replied the captain, "and old Satan will use that to cheat him with just as long as he can. Nothing less than the power of the Lord *could* make much change in him, I'm sure;

but nothing else can save industrious people, for that matter. Industry ain't goin' to save 'em, nor honesty ain't goin' to save 'em, nor morality ain't goin' to, nor intellectuality alone ain't; nothing is but Christ. A taking hold of Him and making Him your own is the only way there is to get to Heaven. First become His disciple, and then your life in the Lord should be the reason for your upright life and your good works, the source of it. But I don't think a man can be a Christian and not be honest and moral and industrious, too, for that matter."

At Meadowville Captain Morgan stopped at the stile of the meeting-house, and assisted his wife and daughter from the carriage.

Two or three people came up and shook hands with them, telling Mrs. Morgan that they were glad to see her.

Others spoke to the two women in the vestibule while Captain Morgan was hitching his horse. And Mrs. Morgan felt as if she had just returned from a long journey. She remembered the land in which she had been as one on which the sun never shone. How joyous she was to walk again on her native shores and bask in its sunshine!

A song was begun. Mrs. Morgan advanced down the aisle behind Captain Morgan, and Helen followed her mother. As Mrs. Morgan found the hymn and united with the congregation in singing, the bloom of the honeysuckle was on her face, and no thought of the white hair was in her mind.

In solemn, measured tones, the pastor, who had served that church long and faithfully, read the

parable of the sower. And in the conclusion of his sermon, said:

"If there be soil before me, which is not ready for the seed of truth, prepare the ground. By the hand of God with your plows of determination, break up the dry, hardened paths. Increase the depth of the soil so that the growth from this seed may not wither. Root out the thorns in the land of your souls. Each rocky hillside as well as every meadow within the range of my vision may be turned into productive soil. Let it be so. As you return to your homes, may God's word remain with you, and bring forth an abundant harvest of the golden grains of righteousness."

The services ended, and the congregation dispersed. The shepherd of the flock joined Mrs. Morgan and Helen, who lingered in the vestibule talking, and expressed his delight at having Mrs. Morgan present again.

Captain Morgan drove up to the stile and waited. Several vehicles pressed for the place where his carriage stood. He hesitated yielding it for a while, thinking, "They will come soon." Finally he drove to one side. Other people came out, got in their buggies, and passed the captain. Some went down the street afoot, some up the street, and still "they" had not come.

The sexton swung one of the big doors forward. Captain Morgan drew up in front of the churchyard gate. Then "they" issued from the half-closed doorway, and Mrs. Morgan asked, "Are you ready?"

"Ready?" But the honeysuckle bloom in her face prompted him to add, "Take your time."

"I reckon we have taken it, and as much of other people's too as they thought they could spare," said Mrs. Morgan, as she went toward the carriage.

"You haven't taken any of mine yet," spoke a strong young voice near her.

"Why, that you, Bruce?" she said, extending her hand to him.

"I am very glad indeed that you are able to be out."

He handed Mrs. Morgan into the carriage, and Helen after her.

Helen's handkerchief slipped from its mysterious hiding-place about the waist of her gown. But Captain Morgan drove off before Bruce had an opportunity to get the dainty article of lawn and lace.

Bruce afterwards put the handkerchief in his pocket, and it caused a train of thought that lasted him during half of his ride home. Some of his thoughts were these:

"Where is there another young lady who can wear one dress so long, and yet impart to it a look of freshness all the time? I don't know what it's made of, and I don't know how it's made, but it puts one to wondering about it, and leads one's mind to dwell on the wearer instead of on the costume." Having moved thus far toward the brink of danger, he was content to stop.

And when he drove up by the side of the car-

riage, he gave the handkerchief to Helen without bestowing further thought upon her.

Upon arriving at home, Mrs. Morgan exchanged her dress for a wrapper, and lay down on the bed.

Captain Morgan came in after a short time from unhitching his horse and feeding him. Upon observing his wife, he said:

"You are worn out, aren't you? I was afraid you would be."

"You thought at first that I could not go at all, and now you think I ought to have stood the trip like a strong person. That is as consistent as—dressin' up in your Sunday clothes and not blackin' the heels of your shoes. But maybe you think it's a waste of time to black your shoes where you can't see them. I don't know that I ever heard you give any good reason for it."

He gave none then, but sat down smiling, picked up a paper, and began looking over it.

About the time that Mrs. Morgan rose from the bed, the captain began reading an article aloud. Mrs. Morgan stepped into the hall for something, and Captain Morgan stopped and waited for her to return. When she came in, he resumed reading. Before long she went again to the hall for a fan which she knew to be out there. Captain Morgan again stopped.

"Why don't you listen?" he asked, when Mrs. Morgan had returned the second time.

"I'm listening," she replied.

"It's a strange sort," said he.

"Well, that's twice then to-day that I have

proved to you that I can do more than you thought I could."

Late in the afternoon the couple sat on the veranda, and Captain Morgan said:

"What a privilege it is to have one day of rest in seven. What a pity to abuse it! When people realize that God has been good to them as you and I know He has been good to us, it is easier, I reckon, to be grateful."

Mrs. Morgan got up and walked to the end of the veranda, thinking: "That makes three things I've done to-day that he didn't think I could do. I have wanted back those years that I spent in sickness. I've wanted them back for the very love of life itself; for the full enjoyment of its pleasures. I have felt cheated."

She looked down near the pike-gate and saw Helen coming toward the house. But only Helen knew why she turned her back to the road. She feared that Bruce Turner, as he passed, would see in her face what she knew was in her heart, love for him.

CHAPTER XXV

Bruce tapped on the door of Uncle Dan's bedroom. But receiving only a groan for an answer, he turned the knob and went in.

"Why, are you sick?" he asked. "I wondered why you didn't come to breakfast."

"Yes, boy, I think I'm sick. Anyhow, it's come. There ain't a-goin' to be no Uncle Dan much longer."

"Oh, don't talk that way. Let me help you with your clothes." Bruce picked up some articles which lay on a chair, and carried them to the bed.

"Take 'em back, boy, take 'em back. I'll never have no more use fer 'em. It'll be my Sundays, the nex' clo'es what I wear, an' I'll not have nothin' to do with the puttin' on of 'em either." And Uncle Dan groaned long and heavily.

"Where do you hurt?" asked Bruce.

"I reckon you mean fer me to tell you 'bout the ketch what I've got in my side; but, boy, ef that was all what I was afeerd of, it wouldn't be so pow'ful bad. Fer I 'ud know when I got to where I couldn't stand it, there would be a better place fer me to go out to. As 'tis, though, when the ketch gits too much fer me, the place what I've got to go out to, it ain't no better place. O boy! O boy! O boy! can't you do nothin' fer me? Can't you save me? Can't you save me? Can't you save me?"

"Don't, Uncle Dan, don't! you'll get well. You just caught cold the other day when you got wet

in the woods. Cheer up now; you'll get well. I will send Tom right off for Dr. Grose, and he will set you on your feet again." Bruce turned to leave the room, and Uncle Dan said:

"Tell Tom to stop an' ast Captain Morgan to come. Tell him I sez please come right away." And Uncle Dan groaned again.

"I'll tell Aunt Jane to bring you some breakfast too. I expect a cup of coffee would make you feel better."

"I don't want no breakfast, no coffee, no nothin', boy, except—hurry up with the captain."

As Bruce passed through the hall, he heard a knock at the front door, which proved to be that of Captain Morgan.

When the captain entered the sick-room, Uncle Dan sprang to a sitting posture, and stretched out his arms, crying:

"Captain, Captain, can't you save me? Can't you save me? I'm goin' to be lost."

Bruce drew up the bed-clothes, for the room had not warmed thoroughly since he made the fire in the grate. Then he went down-stairs again to send Tom for the doctor.

"Can't you save me?" cried Uncle Dan once more.

"Why, that is exactly what the Lord has wanted to do all this time—exactly," said Captain Morgan. "He is more anxious to save you than you are to be saved." Then he drew a chair to the side of the bed and seated himself.

"Now, Captain, I'm talkin' facts," said Uncle Dan. "I ain't got no time to waste. I want you

to believe it, fer I know it's so. Bruce, he won't. So, Captain, don't you tell me nothin' what you know ain't straight."

"I never do, do I?"

"No; unless it is 'bout the Lord bein' able to change folks from bein' their ve'y se'ves. Sech as that is all you ever do yarn about. Now this here is the las' thing I'll ever ast o' you: I want you to send me to Heaven without tellin' no yarns 'bout the way to git there. Honest, Captain, an' quick about it." Uncle Dan lay back on his pillow, drew the cover over his chest, and coughed a hard, hoarse cough. Then he said: "You say the Lord wants me there? Honest, Captain, is that a fact? None o' yer stretchin' now. I ain't got time fer that."

"Honestly, it is a fact, Uncle Dan."

"What does he want with me? Does he want to put me to work, you reckon?"

"He wants you because He loves you. He wants to make you happy and safe forever and ever."

"He wants to mek me happy an' safe forever an' ever. He wants to do it, you say?"

"Yes; He wants to. He has loved you so long—all your life."

"Loved me all my life? Me? Captain, honest?"

"Honestly, Uncle Dan, He has."

"How you know?"

"He says so in His Book."

"He took the pains to put it in a book, did He? The Bible, I reckon you mean?"

"Yes."

"Is it anything like the way mother did, you reckon? She loved me."

"Better."

"Better? Hold on, Captain, none o' yer stretchin,' you know. Honest now?"

"Honestly, Uncle Dan, He's better able to."

"But she, my mother, done so many things fer me."

"Of course she did; she wanted to show her love for you. And God wanted to show His love for you, and He did show it by doing much more for you than even your mother could do. He sent His only son, Jesus, into the world to save you. And Jesus loved you too. He loved you so much that He was willing to leave Heaven, come to this world, and live the life of a man, that of a very poor man too, and then to die for you."

"Fer *me*, Captain? You don't say! I'm pow'ful sorry I ever needed fer Him to do all that."

"We all need it, for that matter."

"But I've sinned so, Captain. You don't know. Oh, I'm so pow'ful sorry I ever sinned!"

"Then you've taken the first step in the right direction, if you are sorry."

"I have? How do you know?"

"Christ said, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' And you've done that."

"I have that. Ain't there nothin' else I have to do?"

"You have to take Him as your Saviour—believe what He tells you is so. And He says that 'whosoever believeth in Him should not perish,

but have everlasting life.' And that *whosoever* means *you*."

"He said that?"

"Yes; Jesus said that. You can trust Him when He's done all the other for you, can't you? After He died He went back to Heaven to prepare a place there for you. Now you want to quit your sins, and believe on Him, take Him as *your* Saviour."

"A place fer me ef I do that? A place fer me, Captain, up in Heaven? Honest?"

"Honestly."

"Well, ain't it good o' Him? He was ready an' a-waitin' to mek it before I let on anything 't all 'bout wantin' of it. It must be a good one too ef He's better able to fix it up then my mother was. Is He, you reckon?"

"Better able? Yes."

"Well, Captain, I ain't no fitten person fer sech as that. I know I ain't. I 'ud feel like I did the time what I went to the grand ball. I saw the other fellers skip over the floor with the fine ladies, but I knowed I couldn't hit the lick, an' so I jes' crope back in a corner an' watched 'em fer a spell. By an' by they begun to look at me, an' then I slid out through the back door, thinkin' it 'ud be a cool day in August when I tried a-nother place what I wasn't fitten fer. An' I b'lieve now ef the Lord 'ud put a back door to the place what He 'ud fix up fer me, I 'ud be fer slippin' out through it. I b'lieve I would."

"But don't you think it's ungrateful not to show

appreciation when He's asked you to let Him fix up a nice place for you?"

"I think it is. It seems to me, though, ef a feller's a mind to slosh round in his dirty clo'es till it's nigh time to go into the place he's too onery to have it anyhow. Ef the Lord wasn't jes' the Lord, I b'lieve He 'ud tell the feller that he could look out fer hisse'f now."

"But instead of that He is still anxious for you to have it," said Captain Morgan.

"Ain't He good? But I've got sech little time left."

"Enough in which to yield your heart to Him, and let Him make you fit for Heaven."

"He will do that, you say? Honest, Captain?"

"Honestly, Uncle Dan; He is anxious to do it."

"Captain, Captain, I tell you honest I don't b'lieve I kin do it. I'm 'shamed to. It looks like takin' too much advantage of Him when He's so good. I've been so onery, sinnin' away all the good days o' my life. Now when I know I'm 'bout to die, I come to Him an' ast Him to mek me fit fer Heaven, a place along with Him. It ain't square. It ain't square. I tell you it ain't. He's too good to be slipped up on in any sech a way as that. Too good! If I have been onery all my life, I don't want to go marchin' into Heaven feelin' like a dog what's been caught at killin' sheep. I ain't a-goin' to abuse His goodness in no sech a way as that. I *ain't*."

"But you are abusing it by not letting Him have your heart right now. He is calling for it yet, and

the longer you hold it from Him, the more you will abuse His goodness."

"Honest, Captain?"

"Yes, honestly."

"Well, I've done enough o' that a'ready. I don't want to do no more. Here, Lord, take it, take it. I don't know what you want with it, but ef my keepin' of it is abusin' you, take it. I'm 'shamed to give you the ole, worn-out, sin-stained thing. It's a fact! But ef you want it, take it, an' do whatever you want to with it. Ef it's to mek it fit fer Heaven, all right; but I tell you honest, Lord, I'm 'shamed to ast sech a big job o' you when I have served you so bad. I tell you I am! So ef you don't want to undertake it, I won't blame you."

Voices were heard on the stairs. Bruce entered the room, bringing Dr. Grose with him.

"Good-morning, good-morning," the doctor said, cheerily. "Why, Uncle Dan, what are you doin' sick?"

"I dunno."

Dr. Grose seated himself by the fire and warmed. Then he went to the bed, and Captain Morgan offered his chair.

"Bruce thinks I orter have some o' yer truck," said Uncle Dan, "but it ain't no use, Doctor. You'd better save it fer some other feller what won't mek a die of it, an' waste it all."

"You are not going to treat me that way, I know," said the doctor, beginning to count Uncle Dan's pulse-beats.

"Yes, he's pretty sick," said Dr. Grose to Bruce, who had followed him out of the room; "but I think we can pull him through. A good deal depends on the nursing."

"Well, he shall have that; at least the best that I can give him."

A week passed. Uncle Dan lingered, but he had grown gradually worse. One day Captain Morgan called, carrying with him a bit of dainty nourishment which Helen had prepared. Uncle Dan bade the captain place the dish on the table along with the medicines, and said:

"It ain't no use to waste that either. I take the medicine to satisfy Bruce and the doctor, an' I'll take some o' the other after a while, thinkin' mebbe I'm satisfyin' Miss Helen. Now, Captain, you set down here by the bed. I want to tell you somethin' what seems sorter like satisfyin' you."

The captain seated himself, and Uncle Dan continued:

"Now I b'lieve all you said 'bout the Lord bein' able to change folks so they ain't their ole se'ves. I b'lieve eve'y word of it. I don't b'lieve you ever tole me a single yarn 'bout none of it. I don't b'lieve you ever did. T'other day when the parson come to see me, an' ast me what he did, an' baptized me, fer I wanted to do all what the Lord commanded, so fur as I had the time left to do it in, I sez, 'I wisht I could work fer the Lord.' Actually work fer Him, Captain, an' I meant it. I expected the parson to look 'stonished, but he never. He acted like he knowed jes' how it would

be. I reckon it ain't the first time he's seen a onery feller made to want to work. It's jes' like you sez, Captain, I've been made to *want to work* fer Him. I never could b'lieve I could be made to before. I never could. I know now you don't tell no yarns 't all 'bout it. I know you don't!" Uncle Dan coughed. After resting for a few minutes, he talked on:

"I've been a-thinkin', Captain, a-wonderin' what it is they do Over There. It don't seem to me that it's hardly likely all of 'em play on harps an' walk up an' down the golden streets all the time. It don't seem likely, I say. Fer I ain't never been able to strike a tune here, an' I know good many others what ain't. So it ain't likely, I 'low, that the angels what *kin* play will think that mine is fitten to go 'long with theirn. O' course ef the Lord wants me to play on a harp, He'll fix the tune all right. But jes' walkin' the golden streets, Captain, that seems like it was too lazy a way fer angels to do unless it was them what hadn't done nothin' fer Him here, an' hadn't growed strong 'nough to do hard work there. Why, Captain, ef they have any fishin' or huntin' goin' on there, I won't be strong enough to hold a fishin'-pole or carry a gun, will I?" He coughed a hard, tight cough. Then he said:

"Captain, when you come Over There, I don't want to miss seein' you. Won't you look about fer a little bit of a weak angel? One what looks like Uncle Dan did here, though better lookin', but pow'ful small taters 'long the side o' yerse'f an' t'other big angels what put in their time a-

workin' fer Him while they was here. Won't you, Captain? I'll count it mighty clever of you, jes' like I count what you've done fer me here, an' what you tried to do fer me some time ago. I don't expect to git to neighbor with you much Over There, fer you'll be among the big bugs, an' so many will be wantin' to visit you an' talk with you 'bout what rules you went by to win yer success. They'll be a-wantin' to write you up in the papers Over There. They'll put my name in the news column, whoever meets me at the station, but there won't be nothin' else fer 'em to put in."

Bruce moved away from the bedside to replenish the fire. Uncle Dan's long-stemmed, open-faced watch hung over the mantel; the hands pointed to quarter past ten.

"You'd better stop talking now, don't you think?" Bruce said.

After a short time, Captain Morgan went home. Uncle Dan said:

"Bruce, boy, I know you think I orter keep still, but my time it's growin' short. I want to talk to you while I still know what I'm talkin' about."

"Well, go on then," said Bruce.

"My papers is back there in the bureau-drawer. I had 'em fixed up, fer I've knowed fer sometime that this was a-comin', though I didn't know, o' course, that it 'ud be through pneumonia. I knowed I was a-goin' to die, an' I knowed it wasn't ve'y fur off.

"I've left my money to you. It ain't ve'y much; it won't nigh pay you fer what you've done fer me,

not nigh. Now, boy, I'm goin' to ast you, fer I know you ain't a needin' money, ef you won't take some of it, an' give it to the Lord in some way. I haven't got no time to figger out how, bein' so unused to doin' it, but you kin fix it—jes' git Captain to help you."

"I'll use all of it in that way if you say so; at least I'll turn it over to the captain and let him use it."

"I ain't a-astin' that, boy, but it'll be yourn, an' you kin do as you please with it. I jes' want the Lord to know that I do 'preciate His goodness at the las' anyhow, ef I ain't got no way to show it 'cept by astin' somebody else to do fer Him.

"My ole clo'es, they is fer Tom. An' I bought a nice caliker dress pattern what I want you to give to Aunt Jane. I laid it away in the bureau-drawer 'long with the papers. My cuff-buttons an' my gold-headed cane is fer Captain Morgan. There is some silver spoons o' my mother's in the drawer, they is fer Mrs. Morgan. The gold pin was my mother's; that's fer Miss Helen. My watch, it was my father's, an' it is fer—now, boy, it's fer yer little feller, the oldest one. An' there is a little ring in the drawer fer the little girl, the one what's most like her mother. There's some other trinkets in there too; you kin divide them. I couldn't bear not leavin' nothin' to yer little chaps. This suit o' furniture, what you was so kind to lemme fetch 'long with me, it was my mother's too, an' it was a fine one in its day. Now it's yer weddin' present from Uncle Dan."

"But suppose I never marry?" said Bruce.

"And if I should, suppose I should not marry her—Miss Helen, you are thinkin' about?"

Uncle Dan did not heed the inquiries, but continued:

"Tell the little chillun, boy, that Uncle Dan said fer 'em to let the Lord mek their hearts clean while they air little. Fer 'em not to wait till their hearts grewed worse an' worse, an' till they was 'most ready to die. I wisht I could tell 'em so myse'f, fer I'm afeard you won't. But be sure to tell 'em that, boy—be sure to.

"Now I reckon while my head's still clear, I jes' as well have a word with Aunt Jane an' Tom."

"Don't you think you had better rest a while first?" asked Bruce.

"No; jes' call 'em in."

When Aunt Jane and Tom stood by the bed, weeping, Uncle Dan said:

"I want to tell you all good-by. I'm goin where I won't trouble you no more, Aunt Jane. You've done me some good turns, both o' you. I'm obleeged to you fer 'em."

"Please, Miste' Dan, ef you'll jes stay wid us till nex' hog killin' I won't mek you wuk so," sobbed Aunt Jane.

"Never mind, Aunt Jane, I've forgive you. But when Mr. Bruce fetches his wife here, you mustn't treat her that a-way."

"I ain' gwine to. I ain'."

"Good-by, Tom; do all the right things what you know to do, an' don't do none o' the wrong ones what you know is wrong," said Uncle Dan,

taking Tom's hand. "Good-by, Aunt Jane; come to Heaven to see me."

"You won't have nothin' 't all to do dah, will you?" asked Aunt Jane.

"I dunno, but I hope so."

"Course hit wuz so," said Aunt Jane to Tom that night as they sat before the fireplace in the kitchen. "Dyin' folks wouldn't say hit ef it wuzn't so. He allus acted some like he mought wuk ef it wuzn't so hard fer him. Hit wuz de flesh what wuz weak. He mought 'a' been different ef he hadn't been made jes' dat a-way. Anyhow, he's 'most a angel now."

"He wuz allus mighty good to me," declared Tom; "he allus wuz."

During the early part of the night Uncle Dan asked frequently for his mother. At times he mistook some one in the room for her. A neighbor and Dr. Grose watched with Bruce.

"Did you fetch that from the spring?" Uncle Dan asked once when Bruce moistened his lips. About daybreak he faltered:

"Yes, mother, I'm comin'."

And his spirit fled to join hers.

The news that Tom carried to Captain Morgan was a source of genuine sorrow to each member of the household.

When the captain returned home about noon, he said:

"There ought to be some woman or other there. You don't feel like going, do you, mother?"

"I had a bad night last night. And I'm afraid the shock this mornin' has left me unfit for riskin' anything more to-day."

Mrs. Morgan was no stronger now than she was four months before. And recently she had learned that she was about as well as she need expect ever to be. Helen continued to shield her mother, and when Captain Morgan thus spoke, Helen knew that it was she who must go. So she prepared herself and went along with her father.

Bruce decided to have the funeral at the house. He advised with Helen concerning the arrangements.

Aunt Jane, respecting her promises to the dead, executed Helen's commands as though the wife had arrived already.

Toward night Helen left with her father for home. Driving away from the stile, she heard the lowing of the cows as they came slowly through the pasture to the bars; the call of a turkey as it returned to its night's lodging-place on the roof of the buggy-house; the clatter of the ducks as they gathered in their pens; the cluck of a hen as she hovered her only chick for the night. The refrain of this evening song, "Rest, rest," seemed to her like the echo of the voice that was now silent. The sorrow for the loss surged through her afresh.

On the following morning she gathered all the flowers in the yard and fashioned them into a wreath. "I can scarcely believe we'll never hear

his step on the veranda again, just coming in to sit a while," she said to her mother when she had finished the wreath. Just before she left home she plucked the white rose from the pot in the window. This, too, she carried with her.

The coffin was beneath the portrait of Bruce's uncle in the parlor. Helen laid the wreath on the casket. Then she tucked the rose inside the coffin as her more personal tribute to the dead. As she finished, a voice beside her said:

"Miss Helen, I want to put this somewhere. It's the only thing in bloom on the place. 'Winter pinks,' Uncle Dan called 'em." But Bruce did not think at the time that the man whose memory he thus honored had been the only person dwelling there whose soul had blossomed into life. That soul-blossom, too, might well be termed a winter-pink. Bruce only continued: "The flowers I got from the florist's don't seem the same hardly. What must I do with these?"

Helen took the small bunch and placed it beside the rose.

Uncle Dan was laid away that afternoon—it was Sunday—in the little graveyard on the hillside. The awful thump of the clods upon his coffin was heard. The flowers were placed on the grave.

CHAPTER XXVI

Bruce had heard of the party. Indeed, he had been invited to it, but he did not wish to go. The thought of it, however, revived certain memories, making him too restless to remain at home and read. So he put on a fresh collar and clean cuffs, slipped into his Sunday coat, and drove away to call on Helen Morgan. He had known Helen all her life, had lived neighbor to her, and had been at her home frequently, but he had never gone before especially to see her. Now as he drove along, he wondered why he had never called on her, but he found no better reason than that he had never thought of going.

Helen believed that she heard the sound of buggy-wheels. And she endeavored to strain her ears beyond the crackling of the fresh coal in the grate. "Yes, it is a buggy," she thought, "and I'm disappointed because he didn't come in a sleigh." She moved a figure on the mantel-piece, looked at her image in the glass over a picture, and made a movement at smoothing back the ringlets about her face. Then she went to the front door.

When she saw Bruce Turner instead of her escort to the party, she was somewhat embarrassed, for she did not know into which room she should invite him. But Bruce hung his overcoat and hat on the rack in the hall and disposed of himself by walking into the parlor. Then he too became embarrassed. But he reasoned within

himself that young men called on young women with intentions no more serious than that of enjoying a pleasant conversation, and that young women received these visits with no other thought than that of passing the time pleasantly.

A volume of Wordsworth lay on the table by the lamp. Upon seeing it, Bruce was reminded of a subject to talk about.

Helen replied to a remark by saying, "You are an admirer of Wordsworth, then?" She seated herself by the fire, thinking, "I should have known it."

As Bruce answered, he glanced around him, marveling at the taste displayed in the furnishing of the room. It was the first time that he had ever been in there.

Until Helen's comments on the book, Bruce thought of her as having no opportunity of late years to cultivate her mind if, indeed, she had the desire. Having discovered that she exercised good taste in reading, he wished to extend his investigations, and so he said:

"Good books afford unalloyed pleasure, don't they? Some one else has said something like that, but it is so true it will bear repeating."

"They certainly do, and more besides," said she. "Good books are tools with which to build one's character, with which to shape one's destiny. If one can read but a short time each day and will read something of real worth he will be broadened and strengthened mentally and spiritually. Oh, I'm so glad when the long winter nights come! I have a good opportunity then to read."

Bruce compared this remark with the things he had heard other girls say. Then he thought of Camilla, whom he had regarded as the sprightliest and most fascinating of the number, and knew that she never had shown reflection or serious purpose in life. At length he asked:

"You refer to the pursuit of some special subject, not to desultory reading?" He watched the fine play of expression on her face which the interest of the subject together with the interest in her companion brought out.

"That way will secure better mental training perhaps, but if one hasn't the facilities for it, he can usually get hold of something which will provoke thought. Then he can think on a subject, and think all around it. It's thinking that does the work. At least—but what do you say about it?"

"If I speak what I have in mind, I'll say that I am very content to listen to what you say about it. For you persuade me that girls do think sometimes, that their decisions are not always results of emotions. More correctly speaking, I'm persuaded that one young lady of my acquaintance *thinks*—actually thinks out her own problems. What a discovery! People who make wonderful discoveries, let's see? What happens to them? Can't you *think*?"

"Now if I had foreseen this turn, I should never in the world have afforded the Turner an opportunity for fame."

"Why, Miss Helen, I beg your pardon, but brilliancy and excellent reasoning faculties is a rare combination, isn't it?"

"Why do you make sport of my serious-minded-

ness?" She rose, for she heard a rap on the front door.

Bruce heard the knock too. The reason for the fire in the parlor flashed through his mind, and so he said:

"Oh Miss Helen, you are going to the party! I'm glad I came early then, but I'm not so glad I have to leave early. May I come back Thursday evening and stay longer?"

She told him that he might come. Then she admitted Harry Foster, a short, stout youth with a sparse covering of down upon his upper lip.

Soon Bruce left, and Helen drove off in a sleigh with Harry.

The sleet on the snow made sleighing delightful. The grainy particles on the ground glistened under the light of the full moon, and the ice pendants on the trees glittered. A wire fence along the roadside looked to Helen like a lace pattern in jewels. Even the chime of the sleigh-bells added to her pleasure. Only one note of discord did she hear, and that she was ashamed to think of as such; for her escort was endeavoring honestly to entertain her. But her thoughts were occupied with the beauty about her and with her companion of the earlier part of the evening, so that she was really unable to attend to what Harry said. And when Harry remarked:

"I saw Miss Camilla's beau in town this afternoon," because it seemed the easiest thing to say, Helen asked:

"And what did you think of him?"

"He's a dandified-looking little fellow, right

pleasant manners, but—but rather small, I think.” He spoke in the doubtful tones of a young brother seeking the expression of the maturer judgment of an older and highly valued sister.

Catching the tones, she responded in the spirit of the elder sister:

“You don’t know anything positively against him, do you? He may be as fine as his manners are.”

Then Harry, thrusting his opinion more boldly to the front, said:

“He may be, but I don’t believe it.”

“What is his occupation?” asked Helen.

“Why, he is a clerk in one of those big stores in the city.”

Other sleigh-bells chimed out on the cold, still air. Helen and Harry saw a sleigh enter the lane in front of theirs. Other sleighs came down the hill and entered afterwards.

Camilla smiled as she welcomed her guests, but Helen saw that the bow of scarlet ribbon for which Camilla showed such fondness had a drapery of black net veiling.

The large parlor was well filled when the last couple arrived.

The young people talked gaily as a company of the kind will. Helen observed that all eyes wandered at times to the stranger, Mr. Tune.

After a short time several small tables were moved from the corners of the room and from the hall adjacent. Around these the guests gathered to play euchre. Very nearly every one had played when a young matron said to Helen:

"What a pity you don't play."

In a sense Helen felt the need of sympathy, for she was beginning to regard herself, as she thought other people must regard her, as useless to the company.

Nina Crane was present to assist in entertaining. And Joel and little Annie were permitted to stay up to look on.

From time to time the children moved about the room, conscious that they "should be seen and not heard." They whispered to each other, and replied shyly to the questions asked them.

Helen called the little ones to the sofa near the fire.

"What do you think of all this?" she asked. "Do you like it as well as Santa Claus's coming?"

"Not quite," answered Joel; "for he brings things."

"He brought me the most beautifulest doll last night," said little Annie.

Pointing to the stranger, Joel whispered:

"Cousin Helen, he told me he was goin' to be our uncle." And both children laughed.

"But maybe you oughtn't tell," said Helen.

"Oh, that won't matter," said Joel. "Mr. Bruce told us that too, but he never was, and I don't believe this one will be either."

"I hope not," said little Annie, somewhat louder.

"What are you hoping about?" asked Camilla, coming near the fire.

Joel laughed, but little Annie looked sober. And Helen said:

"I'm learning your secrets."

"I hopes he won't be my uncle," remarked little Annie; "he's too mushy."

"Well, don't tell anybody else anything about it," pleaded Camilla. "I'm glad it happened to be Cousin Helen this time." Camilla laughed and looked at Helen.

"I shall not tell," said Helen, laughing in return.

"What have you all found here by yourselves that's so amusing?" asked Nina, coming up. "Camilla, you all had better eat now," she said. Then she went to the players and told them to lay by their cards until after supper.

A large bunch of mistletoe showed above the picture which hung over the mantel in the dining-room, and another above the picture which was on the wall opposite. A miniature holly-tree, hanging heavy with berries, decorated the table. Dishes of candy, of fruits, and of nuts, and plates of cake were also on the table. Seats were arranged around the wall.

While Helen ate, she observed the group of matrons at the door. And she wondered if she could tell something of the manner in which these women regarded the pleasures of early life. One woman watched the young people, hoping that they would get from these early experiences what she had obtained—contentment. There was another who had lost sympathy with such pleasures when she herself was done with them. Still another looked on, thinking that she would select her sweetmeats differently if she could but pass

the way again. And another, who, from her own experience, thought that the pleasures of middle life were greater than those to be found sooner. Another looked on, believing that the early enjoyments were the best. She realized, however, that there were pleasures all along life's road, but some of these she had failed to recognize as such until she had passed them.

"Now, Miss Helen, what is your opinion?" asked Harry.

"If what the children spoke of should occur, in what manner will Camilla look back on this evening?" thought Helen. Then she said:

"About what, Harry?"

"What we were speaking of as we came on."

"Unless I knew something more about him, I shouldn't like to express an opinion."

"You don't believe there is anything in a first impression?"

"I believe it may be very incorrect sometimes."

"But sometimes it is very correct. I see you don't want to commit yourself, but I know what your opinion is anyhow; and that's just mine."

"But, Harry, I haven't told you mine."

"I know you haven't, but if it were favorable, you *would* tell it."

Helen smiled.

Camilla and Mr. Tune rose, and led the way back to the parlor.

When all the guests, except Howard, had gone, Camilla sat down at the piano. She played the

selections which she had played on a previous occasion when another lover listened near her. And she thought of that other evening when she had broken her engagement with Bruce Turner. And a strong desire arose to set aside her promise to Howard Tune and draw another breath of sweet liberty. She stopped in the middle of a piece and drew the black net veiling which covered the bow of scarlet ribbon.

"That's exquisite!" declared Howard, bending his shoulders over one end of the square piano on which his elbows rested.

At the sound of his voice, Camilla let the veil fall over the bow, and commenced playing. "Bruce never called my playing exquisite," she thought; "for he knew it wasn't. But this one, if he knew good playing from bad, which he doesn't, would call mine good, thinking his insincerity would please me. I can live in the city, though, where I can see something besides cows and pigs and chickens, and hear something besides the dinner-bell." And she smiled, but she did not know at what.

A door slammed, and Camilla knew that her mother wished Mr. Tune to leave. So she rose from the piano-stool, went to the fire, and punched down the coals in the grate.

"I guess we'd better not put on any more fuel," said he, following her to the hearth.

"You don't think I intend to?" she thought. But she stood the poker in the corner without answering.

He then went into the hall.

Camilla, seeing Howard return with his overcoat, stopped beneath the swinging lamp. Howard, observing his sweetheart beneath the mistletoe in the frame of the lamp, dropped his greatcoat, put his arms around her and kissed her.

"You impudent man!" she exclaimed, and her face burned with resentment.

"Now, don't!" pleaded he. "That's a privilege which the mistletoe offered. Anyhow, I don't believe any other fellow was ever engaged to a girl for four months without kissing her."

"You don't? Well, how much do you know about it? You have never told me about the other girls you have been engaged to."

"I have never been engaged to any other, but I've heard fellows talk about it."

"They talk about it then, do they?" said Camilla, straightening back her shoulders with an air of defiance.

"Some of them do when they fall out with the girl, but I wouldn't. I think it's mean. Besides, you know it's only three months now until I come to take you back with me."

"When you come, then it will be time enough," she said as she would have pacified the pleadings of a child with fair promises. She seated herself on the arm of a large chair.

"I know you are the best girl in the world," Howard said. And all the goodness of his soul showed in his face. "I would like though to have one voluntary kiss before I go. I have to return to duty in the morning, you know, and I'll not have another opportunity to see you until I come

to marry you. It will help me to be better. I'll live true to it, Camilla, when I'm away from you. I promise you I will."

Camilla sat silent for a time, thinking, "If there were any other way for me to get out, I would confess the truth to him. For I'm ashamed to receive all that he has to offer, and give—what in return? Oh, oh! I would give the world to be able to give him what he gives me! Yes, I'd give the world to love him!"

"Won't you?" pleaded he.

"Once," she said.

He stooped and kissed her. She thought, "Marriage is the only way open for me to the world, and who would blame me?"

After Howard left, Camilla went to her room. She took off the bow of scarlet ribbon and arranged the black net veiling over it, thinking as she did so: "It's hardly probable that he thinks only of me. He knows that father has a good property. I believe he really loves me now, but I'm pretty sure he wouldn't have been so strongly attracted to me in the beginning if he hadn't thought there would be some money too. So I reckon we are not so uneven after all. Anyhow, he's my bridge to the world. But oh, oh, what a way! what a way!"

A week later, Mrs. Morgan said to Camilla:

"You'd better have had Bruce Turner; he's heap the best chance." Then her head went back

and her chin came down. "If you don't see it now, you will see it after a while."

"Mother, you forget that I'm going to be a city lady," said Camilla. She skipped across the floor, humming a merry tune.

"Girls is such fools!" declared Mrs. Morgan. "This is better, though, than never marryin' 't all," she thought. Then she put the hem, which she had just laid, under the foot of the sewing-machine, and stitched away on the wedding petticoat.

CHAPTER XXVII

Prohibition had been agitated in Meadowville, and great interest had been created throughout the voting district.

Among the people desiring the sale of liquor to continue, was Bruce Turner. Bruce owned two houses in the town, one of which was rented for a saloon. For a time he took no active measures against the opposing faction. But fearing that the prohibition movement would succeed, he at length put forth all his efforts against it. At first he refused to employ some of the means frequently used to secure votes, but finally he bought votes with whisky and with money. On the morning of the election he left home early to put in a full day's work.

In endeavoring to gain a vote, Bruce said:

"You know which side will bring the money into the place, don't you?"

"But Captain Morgan says I ought to vote the other way, and keep whisky away from the people," replied Alf Williams. "He says people are more apt to make a livin' when their brains ain't addled by it."

"What did he give you?"

"Oh, he never give me nothin'."

"Well, here," said Bruce, running his hand into his pocket, "take this. Now you tell Pat MacCarthy if he and his friends don't want to go off somewhere to get a drink, they'd better vote for the antis."

"All right, sir."

Bruce threaded his way to Sam Wells.

"Do you think prohibition here will keep men from drinking liquor?" he asked.

"I dunno. Captain Morgan said it wouldn't be so convenient; it would do some good."

"But then don't you believe if they want it they will go somewhere else to buy it?"

"I dunno 'bout that."

"They would. It would be just the means of sending money out of the town. Captain didn't offer to do anything for you, did he? I'll let you have that steer you wanted. I didn't want to sell him yet, but I'll let you have him. Now go talk to Sam Reed. See which side he's on; see that he's on the right side."

"I'll do that."

In a few minutes Bruce laid his hand on the shoulder of Moses Emmons, and said:

"You know which side stands for the interest of the community, don't you?"

"I thought I did; but Captain Morgan he sez gittin' saloons out o' reach will help keep the boys from learnin' to drink. I've got a little feller o' my own comin' on, you know, an' I don't want him to learn to like it."

"If the saloons here are closed, don't you suppose whisky will be brought from some other place?" argued Bruce. "Because it is a little hard to get, don't you think the boys will be more anxious for it?" He felt a blush of shame mantle his cheeks.

"I hadn't thought of it that way; mebbe so."

"You vote the other way; I'll rent you that ground for tobacco that we were talking about the other day."

"You will? I need that ground bad."

"I won't charge you big rent either."

"Well, I do need it bad."

"I'm ready to let you have it."

"Very well. I'll vote as you say, and take it."

Dave Lacy replied to Bruce's inquiry:

"Captain Morgan said that a free use of liquor would keep any man from havin' the honor what he orter have. I never touch it myse'f, an' I tole him so. But he sez that a feller orter try to keep other people from losin' their honor ef 'tis by jes' castin' a vote."

"What is Captain Morgan goin' to give you for upholding the honor of other men?"

"Nothin', I reckon. He never said nothin' 'bout it."

"Wouldn't two dollars and a half be worth more to you than the honor of a dozen men? Their honor will not put anything in your pocket, will it?"

"Not that I kin see; but he's about made me think that a man of honor wouldn't sell his vote. I've always been a-makin' somethin' off mine before."

"Here, you have this money."

"Turner, I say I've always been used to gittin' somethin' fer mine, but the captain says it ain't honorable."

"Oh, never mind the captain."

Dave accepted the money, and Bruce said:

"You go find out how Harry Jones stands. There are several negroes who will vote the way he tells them. Have Harry give 'em a drink around. I'll pay for the liquor. Go on and talk to him, and I'll be round there myself directly to see him."

Dan Walker, a prominent man, came up to Bruce and said:

"I know where I can use fifteen dollars to advantage if you will let me have that amount." Bruce responded to the request, but Mr. Walker used the money for his personal benefit.

The next person to whom Bruce spoke was Alvin Bridges. And Alvin said:

"Captain Morgan jes' reminded me that it was the saloon I owed the wrecked home of my daughter to. Her husband gits the liquor right here, an' goes home an' beats her. He spends all the money he kin git hold of that way, an' leaves her an' the children without hardly anything to eat an' no clo'es to speak of. No, sir, I don't take none o' yer money this time. All I've ever took fer votin' fer the saloons ain't made it no better fer her in the end. So I'm goin' to try the other way now. I'm goin' to vote agin 'em, sir. I am."

"I thought you wanted that position in the store," said Bruce. "I can secure it for you, and then you can take care of your daughter yourself."

"I do want that place, sir. You wouldn't turn down a fellow that you could do so much fer just because he wouldn't vote your way, would you?"

"I can get the place for somebody who will vote my way."

"Don't nobody need it worse than I do for my daughter an' her little children."

"Well, then you ought to do the right thing to get it."

"Vote fer the whisky?"

"Yes; I'll get you the place then."

"No, sir; I don't vote fer no whisky. I don't."

Bruce turned away, thinking of what Captain Morgan said to him in the beginning of the campaign:

"If you don't fight the devil, don't fight for him. Not fighting him, though, is in a manner fighting for him."

But coming upon Bob Glass, Bruce stopped to speak to him. Bob replied:

"Captain Morgan has jes' recalled to my mind what killed my wife four years ago. Dick would take his toddy ever since he was growed up, an' some before. Finally he got to drinkin' hard, an' his maw would lay 'wake o' nights waitin' fer him to come in. When he 'ud come, she would say, 'Richard' (she always called him Richard), 'I'm so glad you've come, my boy. Yer bed's a-waitin' fer you.' Then she would git up, an' go help him off to bed, an' come back an' cry the rest of the night many a time. After while she got sick, an' the doctor said it was jes' that—it was her heart what was broke over Dick. She died. Dick he quit drinkin' then, but it was too late to heal up her heart. No, sir, I don't vote fer no whisky. I uster, that's what the captain knowed, but I don't do it now." And he wiped his eyes on the sleeve of his striped cotton shirt.

Bruce went off wondering, "Has Captain Morgan spoken to everybody here to-day?" There were other men working for prohibition, but none of them were fighting more valiantly than the captain was.

There was a house near the centre of the town which had stood vacant for a time. On this occasion, though, the ladies of one of the churches sold ice-cream and cake there. During the afternoon Bruce observed a party of men carrying some one into the building. Then he saw Dr. Grose hurrying along. Overtaking the doctor, Bruce asked, "Somebody sick?"

"Captain Morgan."

"Captain Morgan? What's up?"

"Knocked down."

"Knocked down!" ejaculated Bruce.

Bob Glass, to whom Bruce had talked in the morning, said:

"He had a fight a while ago."

"Captain Morgan never fought," said Bruce, warmly.

"I never seen him," said Bob; "but Harry Jones tole me that he seen Mr. Nealy knock him down, an' he 'sposed the captain hit him."

Mr. Nealy was an anti-prohibition leader, but Bruce said:

"Whoever did it is to blame for it, and not Captain Morgan."

"I thought you was workin' agin the captain," said Bob.

"I'm working against prohibition, not against Captain Morgan." And Bruce strode off rapidly.

to do whatever he could for his highly esteemed friend.

"Is he much hurt?" he asked, wedging his way through the crowd at the door.

"Pretty bad," replied Jeff Goodwin, and added: "Nealy said that the captain was doin' more harm than anybody else, and if he wasn't stopped, the antis would be beat. He had some words with the captain, and finally knocked him down, and beat him up considerably. I don't believe the captain was to blame any in it. If it had been almost anybody else, I would think he might have been provoked to hit Nealy, comin' up the way Nealy did. But I don't believe the captain was."

"I know he wasn't," said Bruce, pushing into the room. "Give me something to do for him," he said to Dr. Grose, who was kneeling over the prostrate form.

"Clear out the door, so he can get more air."

Bruce scattered the men from the doorway, and drove back the women who had gathered around.

When Captain Morgan recovered from the faint, he asked:

"Have the polls closed?"

"No," answered Bruce.

"Can't you fix me up, Doctor, so I can get out there again?"

"You'll have to quit now," said the doctor; "but you'll be all right for the next election. Have you got the bandage ready, Mrs. Crane?"

"Here it is." And Nina handed the doctor the strip of cloth. Then she sent for her husband.

Alvin came, and by and by assisted the captain in getting in Bruce Turner's buggy.

As Bruce drove along, he thought of more work that he might have done. But a groan from the captain called forth another expression of sympathy for him.

"Does the jarring hurt your head much?"

"It may be owing to the jarring, for my head feels as if it might split. I have the satisfaction of knowing though that I have done what I could, and so I'm content. For the remainder the Lord will take care of that; at least for my responsibility in it."

Bruce thought, "I'm not content, for I don't know about the Lord taking care of my part in it."

"When we have done all that we can for the cause of the right, then our responsibility for it ceases, and not till then," the captain observed.

"Well, you ought to be satisfied," said Bruce, laughing.

"Are you, Bruce?"

"Captain, we are both out of it now, and I tell you honestly, I think it will be pretty close, pretty close. I can't tell whether I'm satisfied until I hear which way it goes."

"I mean after having done what you could for the cause of righteousness, are you satisfied about your personal responsibility for it?"

Bruce regarded the question as unkind, for he had forsaken the cause which he advocated on the captain's account. So he made no reply, but whipped up his horse, and drove the remainder of the way in silence.

Helen sat on the veranda, reading. Upon seeing her father's bandaged head, she dropped her book and ran to the stile.

"Don't be alarmed, daughter," the captain said; "and don't let it distress your mother. Can't I get in without her seeing me?"

But Mrs. Morgan was coming down the walk.

"What does it mean?" Helen demanded of Bruce.

"Just the election, Miss Helen. He will be all right in a little while."

"Did some drunken man strike him?" Helen asked, excitedly.

"No, no, Miss Helen, the man wasn't drunk. Don't be alarmed."

"Wasn't drunk! Some one in his right senses did it? But let's take father where he can lie down."

She on one side and Bruce on the other assisted the captain to the house.

Mrs. Morgan went ahead to put the bed in readiness.

After Helen made her father as comfortable as she could, she went on the veranda, and gave vent to her distress in tears.

When Bruce came out and found Helen crying, he said:

"Don't grieve; he is not seriously wounded. He'll be well soon. I don't think he'll need much attention during the night, but maybe I'd better stay with him. I'll go home now, and come back after a while."

"No, you needn't," she spoke up promptly.

"Miss Helen, it will be better maybe. Just you and your mother here."

"I don't want you to," she said indignantly. "You were partly the cause of his trouble."

"Miss Helen, I never struck him. I never had anything to do with it."

"You've been doing all you could against prohibition. I know you have."

"But that is a different thing, Miss Helen," Bruce pleaded.

"It is hardly different with him. I intend to sit by him myself to-night." She rose and returned to the bedside.

As Bruce drove homeward, he thought: "Well, I've seen another new feature of Miss Helen's character—new to me. I admire her spunk, but she needn't blame me. I never knocked her father down. Besides, I've done everything for him that I could. But a woman usually looks at things from a personal standpoint. However, I'm not going to let that keep me from doing what I can for the captain."

And night found Bruce stationed on one side of Captain Morgan's bed and Helen on the other. Once Bruce said:

"Miss Helen, you had better go and rest, don't you think?"

"I thought I said I was going to do the watching," she replied. But Bruce knew that Helen had relented somewhat toward him.

Bruce watched the next night and the next, and called daily afterwards until the captain was out again. During one of the calls he and Captain

Morgan were talking about the election, and the captain said:

"I've thought maybe my getting hurt and taking you away might have had something to do with the election going for prohibition."

Bruce said nothing, but swayed himself nervously in the straight-backed chair. Captain Morgan continued:

"I know people are talking about me having a fight. I would hate the reproach, I tell you I would, if it hadn't been brought about for the sake of the Lord's cause."

"But you never struck him?" queried Bruce. He did not doubt, however, the truth of his former assertion concerning the captain's attitude.

"No; I never struck him at all. Nealy said that he would hit me if I didn't quit workin' for prohibition, or somethin' to that effect. I told him I wouldn't. I never would as long as there was anything that I could do. Then he struck me. You know what followed better than I do, I reckon. I'll wear this scar, no doubt, as long as I live, but I wouldn't take a gold mine for it and be without it. It'll remind me of the Lord's love for me. I'll know He thought enough of me to ask me to bear shame and violence for His sake. There's joy in doin' that."

"Then you don't feel a bit like thrashin' Nealy?" asked Bruce.

"Why, no, of course I don't. I pity him sincerely."

"What a man!"

"What friendship you have shown for me during my sickness! I do appreciate it."

"I've always felt it for you, Captain; at least I can't remember the time when I didn't."

"I believe you."

"You don't regard the situation, then, as Miss Helen thought you did?"

"How's that?"

"Because I was of the opposing side, she refused at first to let me do anything for you." And Bruce laughed.

"Oh, did she? Well, I wish you were as loyal to your Master as you have been to me. I wish you were! With your abilities you could do much good in the world. And you'll have to give an account for the use of those abilities."

"It's hard though for me not to put my financial interests first," said Bruce. "I want to succeed in life."

"Have you extended your plans for success into the other world? You know it all doesn't stop when we are through with this world."

"Extended plans for success into the other world? I'm afraid I haven't been as long-sighted as that with all my business principles." And he rose to go.

"You will want perseverance, courage, good cheer, brotherly kindness, and other such business principles as you'll find in Proverbs, in James, in Deuteronomy, in the twelfth chapter of Romans. Follow the principles which the Book gives, Bruce, and they will lead you to success, real success."

CHAPTER XXVIII

One morning in January, Bruce set out to ride over his farm. He came to the little graveyard on the hillside, stopped at the fence, and looked at the monument which he had put over Uncle Dan's grave.

"He would say, 'It's too fine fer me,'" thought Bruce. "But, dear old fellow, I haven't paid half as much for it in dollars and cents as I've paid in regrets that I couldn't help you in the way you wanted me to help you. You were saved, but not through my instrumentality." Bruce turned and rode across the field, thinking:

"If Uncle Dan had been living, maybe he would have kept me from fighting prohibition as I did. He had an eye for seeing things if he didn't have a hand for doing them. I don't wonder now that Miss Helen blamed me as she did when I took her father home wounded; she had a right to. I was to blame in a measure, though I didn't look at it in that way then. If I had fought for the right cause as Captain Morgan did, or as hard as I fought on the opposite side, probably he wouldn't have been struck. What a big soul the captain has! I didn't realize it before his sickness. Well, I have been trying since then to do as he bade me—to wield what force I have in the right direction. But it's about the most up-hill work I ever tried to do, I think. If Uncle Dan had lived on after his change, and I could have his encouragement, it might be easier. He would help me out

by his manner of seeing things, anyhow." Bruce held his breath for an instant, as if he had run upon something suddenly which both startled and allured him.

"That was what Uncle Dan saw was the best thing for me to do—to marry her," he thought. "I'm not worthy of her; she's so good. But I've always paid my debts. I've always told the truth, or 'most always. I never drank, but my! how I did fight for liquor to stay where other folks could get it. I never used vile language. Still I know I'm not as good as she is. But then I need a companion like her. Yes, I do. I need her encouragement, her sympathy, and—her love. Yes, I do."

A few evenings afterwards Bruce decided to pay Helen a visit. He wondered why he had never wished until recently to make her his wife. For he knew then that she was the woman among women for him to marry.

Captain Morgan answered Bruce's request to see Helen, by saying:

"She is not very well, and I don't think I had better disturb her. Come in and talk to me and Mrs. Morgan."

Bruce accepted the invitation with another new thought piercing his brain. After several attempts to speak of the subject in mind, he said:

"I want to ask you, Captain, and you, Mrs. Morgan, for your consent to marry Miss Helen, to win her. I know I'm not worthy of her, but I'm trying to live as I should. With her by my side I can get on better."

Silence ensued. And Bruce thought:

"Here is this old couple with no one to lean on except Helen, and I'm hoping to take her away for the asking." Then he said:

"If you'll let me be a son to you, I'll be as dutiful as I know how. I'll learn of her. It's been so long since I had father or mother that your places in my esteem will be next to hers, as indeed they are already."

"Oh, but, Bruce, Helen never intends to marry," said Mrs. Morgan. "Besides, how could I ever get on without her?"

"I appreciate your position, Mrs. Morgan, but she would still be a daughter to you."

"I'm afraid it wouldn't be the same," said she, shaking her head.

"Mother," spoke the captain, "we mustn't be selfish in the matter; we must think of her. She is young, and yet she is old enough to decide this question for herself. She has all of life before her, while we have left the greater part of ours behind us." He turned his face and brushed away a tear. Then he continued apologetically to Bruce: "We've become so accustomed to living this way that we dread a change. A change goes hard with old people. And, besides, she is all we have, you know." He took his handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped his eyes.

"I'll be good to her," said Bruce, "as good as I know how."

"It's not that I fear you won't do your part," said the captain. "If I thought you wouldn't, I

would say 'no' very plainly. If you had asked this a year ago, I would have said, 'Bruce, you are not trying to serve your Master's interests as you should, and so I fear you won't serve hers either.' But I can't say that now, for I believe you are doing about the best you know. I believe you are. If her own heart agrees to it, I don't know anybody I would as soon she would marry as you, Bruce."

"I can only express my appreciation of that, Captain, by trying to live up to what you think of me."

Bruce rose, stepped near Mrs. Morgan, and said:

"Won't you try to think of me as a son?" Then he left the room and went home.

When Captain Morgan returned from closing the front door, Mrs. Morgan said:

"I hope though she won't want to marry him."

"Can you think of anybody else that you would rather she would marry?" asked the captain.

"No; he is a good man, and he is able to give her everything she wants." Then she began to speculate concerning Bruce's property.

"Mother, you know it's not his property that makes him worthy in our eyes," said the captain. "You know it is not that. I'm glad of course that she will have an easier life than she's had of late years."

"She can have everything she wants," said the mother; "but how can I get on without her?"

On the following afternoon Bruce drove back to Captain Morgan's.

Helen opened the door. When she answered Bruce concerning her indisposition of the previous evening, she observed a look in his eyes which thrilled her, one that she had never seen there before. And when she invited him into her mother's room, she saw a flush on his face. This she afterwards connected with her parents' rising, as by mutual consent, quitting the room and leaving her alone with Bruce.

The conversation turned into the channel in which it often flowed when Helen and Bruce talked together. Helen remarked:

"I've seen somewhere, if you know the books a person reads, you will know the person. I think there's something in it. And I believe it's just as true, if you know a person you will know who are his favorite authors without his telling you."

"But all people can not divine as well as that; they haven't that power. I haven't. I have to ask to know." Then he drew up his chair by the side of hers.

By and by he rose, and leaned against the mantelpiece.

Helen thought: "He must have flirted Camilla. So he might tire of me too. Then she said:

"It seems to me that love ought to be of longer standing than yours is for me to test its strength."

"You don't doubt its sincerity?"

"I don't doubt that, but I do doubt its having strength enough to last."

"You surely know that I mean to be true to you. Surely, you don't doubt that. Won't you promise me?" He sat down by her.

"I can't promise," she answered.

"Well, won't you promise to try to learn to love me a little?"

"No, no!" cried she. And she buried her face in her hands.

"Not just a little bit, when I love you so much." He drew one hand away from her face and held it close in his own.

"Don't, don't!" she cried. "You have no idea what this means to me."

"What this means to you?"

"O Bruce, Bruce! why will you inflict such suffering on me?"

"Such suffering—how?"

"Oh, don't you understand?"

"I understand that I love you."

"And that I love you? You have no conception, I fear, how much."

"I have no conception! Well, we'll see if you can outdo me in the matter." They both laughed. Then he said: "Can't you marry me next week? How happy I am, my darling! *My darling.*" And he kissed the hands which he held in his.

Helen drew away her hands. And after a short time she said:

"Now let's talk sensibly."

"Very well. I believe I'm equal to 'most any-

thing now, even to that. At least I'll do the best I can if you say so." And he smiled.

"Oh, Bruce, you misunderstood me!" There was pain in her tone. "While every word I said was true, too true, I shouldn't have let you find it out."

"Shouldn't have let me find it out?"

"Yes; I know I shouldn't, but I couldn't help it. Forgive me if I have done you an injury by doing so, for I can't marry you."

"You can't marry me? Why, my darling?"

"Don't make it hard for me. You know how we are situated here at home. Father and mother can not do without me. It wouldn't be right for me to leave them. That is reason sufficient if there was nothing else."

"But I have already spoken to them about it, you see. Your father said that your own heart must decide the matter. Your own heart has decided. So, now!"

"My dear, good father," she said. "I know he would make any kind of sacrifice for my happiness, but I couldn't be happy to have him do that."

"You don't want to be miserable in order to be happy, do you?"

"Listen; while that is sufficient, it is not all. It may sound conceited to say so, but I think I owe it to you to tell you. I believe Nature intended me to become an artist. By turning aside, I am afraid I should not be able to fulfill my mission. I've no right to put any obstacles in the way."

"Would I be an obstacle? Well, I would try to be as small a one as possible anyhow."

"Yes, I know. Oh, why can't you help me in-

stead of making it hard for me! You know I love you, but I want to do what is right. Don't you want me to be loyal to the higher side of my nature?"

"Of course. But I can't see that you wouldn't be in marrying me. Doesn't your conscience tell you that you owe anything to me?"

"Don't persuade me. I'll have to think."

"What must I do? I can't lose you. Think what that would mean to me. You don't really believe that you can live a truer life without me, do you? You don't, really?"

Looking up at him, she said, brightly:

"I'll think over it, but don't urge me now."

"You can tell me soon, can't you?"

"I don't know."

One afternoon, three months later, when the hyacinths and tulips had bloomed, Bruce rode over to Captain Morgan's. As he drew near the place he saw Helen at the spring. So he dismounted, tied his horse at the pike-gate, and walked down the path to meet her.

A pile of rails lay near the spring. Here Bruce stopped, pushed back his hat, and said:

"I would fill that bucket for you, but I like to watch you do it."

"I'll quit," Helen said, placing the dipper on the stone which covered the spring.

"Then you want me to come?" said he.

"No, no." She took up the cup and commenced dipping the water. After a short time she rested

her arm on the stone, and said, "Your Majesty is quite content now, I suppose?"

"You don't come all this way for half a bucket of water, I'm sure. But I'll come and finish filling it if you want me to."

"I don't want you to come; no."

"I'm not going to carry away just half a bucket of water, I know."

"I'm in the habit of carrying it myself, I thank you," she said, tossing her head.

"But that's going to change, you see," he said, as he moved toward the spring. He laid hold of the handle of the bucket and said: "I'm going to carry it for you anyhow. It's time you were giving me the privilege of helping you more. Haven't I done pretty well about not urging you?"

"I wonder if you think you have?"

He put down the bucket by the pile of rails, and said:

"Have you ever thought about conscience not being a safe guide every time? Have you ever thought about what I'll do in the future when trials and temptations come upon me, and you are not by to sustain me under them? That's a work which no one else can do when hundreds of others can paint pictures, and paint better ones than perhaps you will ever learn to paint."

"But they can't paint my pictures," said Helen. "They can't paint in my stead. You don't sympathize with me. If I could root out this desire, I would have done so long ago. You've no idea what suffering it has caused me." She picked at the rail on which her arm rested. "Yet," she con-

tinued, "I have thought of all those things. Sometimes it seems as if that were just the next step for me to take. I don't see my way clear beyond it. I know though we have to go step by step and trust. Sometimes, as I said, that seems my next duty, and then I think of father and mother, and it does not seem like a duty to leave them. So I'm still unable to come to any definite conclusion."

"Well, you can do this: you can promise me that you will marry me some day. That will be that much off your hands."

"Some day?" she repeated, thoughtfully. I don't like to keep you in suspense, or whatever you might call this way, but really I'm doing the best I can. Some day, does that suit you? Then you will let me take my own time about—about the marriage?"

"Provided," said he, smiling, "you don't take too long a time about it."

"You wouldn't urge me ahead of my duty?"

"I wouldn't if I could help it," said he, placing his foot on a rail and resting his arm on his knee. "Yes, I will let you take your own time about it. I want the right to turn my whole heart loose on you. You promise?"

"Wait just a little while longer." And she thought: "Maybe after all I'm mistaken about my being the only woman who could fit into his life and help him make of it what he wishes to make of it. Maybe he will think so himself after a while if he tired of Camilla. I'll find out whether he did tire

of her, and then I shall know better what to do.”
So she said:

“Come to-morrow evening and then I will tell you ‘yes’ or ‘no.’”

“Can’t tell by to-morrow morning?”

“No.” And she smiled.

As she walked home by his side she perceived that the very shading of his nature was complementary to that of her own. “That must be the way,” she thought; “but I’ll see Camilla first, and then I’ll be better satisfied.”

CHAPTER XXIX

Camilla stood at the window in her old room and looked out on the apple tree in the front yard. She had a feeling akin to sympathy for this tree, for she regarded it as something that had endured trouble. And it seemed to her that the old tree presented a more friendly look to the window than it had done in the past. She thought of what Helen and Captain Morgan had said to her, and wished that she had heeded them. For she believed that she would have been better prepared in a way for the new duties which had come to her. They were those of motherhood.

The shade was down and Camilla stood behind it. When she turned her gaze from the apple tree, her eyes rested upon dim pencil marks on the window-casing. She recognized the marks as those of the miniature liberty-bell which she had drawn there. And she thought of the time when she meant to have liberty throughout her life. But now? Helen would have said that Camilla's expression did credit to personified despair. But Helen did not see the look; nobody saw it except the baby in the crib over whose tiny form Camilla bent when he woke and manifested displeasure.

Camilla drew back the downy, pink covering, and said: "I don't know what to do with you, I don't." At this confession the little voice wailed the louder. The young mother lifted the babe in

her arms, carried him to a low rocking-chair by the stove in the corner, and sat down.

When the baby had ceased crying, Camilla thought: "Is it true, old stove, that I've come to this? Is it true that I am forced to sit in the corner the rest of my days, and send forth men into the world as I have accused you of doing in your way? And will mine make the world a better place to live in? They won't unless they are the right kind. And I'm to send them forth. What am I to do so they will be the right kind? I just don't know."

She leaned over the baby on her lap, saying:

"What is it, baby? It's a strange, hard world that you have come into, isn't it? But you'll have to get used to many things. I feel sorry for you, baby, with so much ahead of you to bump against, but I don't know how to help you. Indeed, I don't. I just don't know what to do with you."

The baby cried out, and Camilla said:

"Oh, you don't like that talk, do you? But I think you had just as well hear the truth. I don't know what to do with you, physically, mentally, or spiritually."

When the babe slept, Camilla laid him back in the crib and drew the cover over him.

Then she went to the dressing-case and unbraided her long, brown hair. After combing her head, she drew open the top drawer to find a string with which to tie the end of her plait, and she saw her bow of scarlet ribbon that was covered with black net veiling.

The bow seemed to be the only article in the

drawer which Camilla could see. So she picked it up, held it out before her, and said inaudibly, "Why have you and the bell mocked me so to-day? Haven't I treated you as well as I could? Shall I put you from view forever with your mockery to remember you by? For never more can I appear arrayed in the insignia of independence. Never again. So to your doom." She opened the stove-door and threw in the bow of scarlet ribbon.

Afterwards she turned to see if the baby stirred. Not seeing the cover rise and fall, she thought, "It makes no difference to you if your mother has failed to maintain her independence, does it?" She bent over him then to listen for his breathing. She knelt and put her face close to his, but still she could not discern that he breathed. "Is he dead?" she thought. "O God! O God!" she cried. "Let him live! I will do the best I can for him." She shook the babe, awakening him. Camilla thought, "Oh! you were only sleeping soundly, and I didn't know it; but what made you frighten me so?" She turned him on his other side and he went to sleep again.

"How he did scare me," she thought as she crossed the room. "But what *am* I to do? If Helen would come perhaps she could tell me. By the way, Helen has never been to see the baby all these six weeks of his life." Then she smiled, for she thought of what her mother would say about Helen's knowing anything concerning the care of a tiny baby. "I know she lacks experience," she thought, in defense of her own opinion; "but I

can't help thinking if she were in my place she could do better than I can do. She is not in my place though; nobody is. Not even his father can do for him what I ought to do; I know that. But I never was so helpless in my life. I hardly believed it possible for a time to come to me when I couldn't find some way out of my difficulties, if I had to jump a fence to get out." She smiled in thinking of her old self. "Now I can't even do that. The baby has robbed me of the last vestige of liberty and independence, and I don't know what to do with him. Shall I wait until he is a man with the hope of regaining them then? Until he is a man! How long that will be! I'll be too old to enjoy life then. Oh, oh, oh! What would Helen tell me to do? Yes, I know very well what she would do if she were in my place, and what her father would tell me to do."

Then Camilla knelt by a chair. After her short prayer, she remained by the chair, thinking.

The baby cried. So Camilla rose, took up the infant again, and seated herself in the low rocking-chair by the stove. As she nourished him she bent over him and kissed his head. The baby looked up into his mother's face and smiled. Camilla hugged the child, and kissed one cheek, and then the other, and his forehead, saying, "You like mother to love you, don't you?" The child smiled again. "Mother does love her little baby. You must forgive her for saying she didn't know what to do with you, for she doesn't; but she'll try to learn." The baby smiled back his forgiveness. Then Camilla thought, "Little babies have

always seemed to me to be such nonentities, but he's different from others." And she said: "You love mother, don't you? Yes, you do. Father always seemed to love me. Maybe I never appreciated him enough, for I thought so much about myself. If mother had but given me her sympathy, instead of trying to have me go her way whether I would or not, how much better it would have been for me. How much better off likely I would be now. If she only had!"

Camilla rose, placed the baby in the crib, and watched him a while as he stared inquiringly at the ceiling. Then she went to her trunk, took out one of his best suits and laid it on the floor beside her. "I'm going to dress you up, and surprise the folks when they come in," she said aloud.

This was her first attempt at dressing the baby. After putting him back in the crib with the tiny pink bows at his wrists, she thought: "I know there must be harder things ahead for me to do for you, but this is sufficient to confirm my belief that bringing up children is harrowing work. It's harrowing to one physically, mentally and spiritually. Why, I'm so weak I tremble."

She dragged the crib to the side of the bed and lay down to rest. After a while she opened her eyes and saw that the baby slept. She tucked the coverlet about him, thinking, "What a pity to muss his finery before the folks see him." Then she lay back on her pillow and thought: "A mother needs to be a combination of a Hercules and an angel. I reckon though the abilities of an angel would be all that's necessary. I think I can forgive my

mother now for all the mistakes she made with me."

By and by she got up, went to the closet, took down a Testament whose appearance age and not use had marred. She sat down by the window, lifted one corner of the shade, and read. At length she closed the book and looked out of the window beneath the raised corner of the shade, thinking:

"How can I live true when I'm situated so that I'm obliged to be false? For I don't love Howard. I know I don't. I never loved him, and yet I can not live with him without pretending that I do. Who could? I reckon Helen would tell me it's my duty to love him now. I wish I could! I wish with all my heart that I could!" She rested her head against the back of the large rocking-chair in which she sat, and in a whisper cried: "O God! am I responsible for all this? Am I? Help me! Help me never to do him further injury. Can't you blot out the past? Won't you blot it out? Can't you help me somehow to get on a true basis? Helen says you are a good God, and I know you must be. Won't you be my God too? I'm ready to follow if you will only lead me. I'm bound as by fetters, it seems to me. I have not even liberty of soul. Can't you, won't you put me on a basis where I can have independence of spirit anyhow?"

The baby cried out; Camilla went to him. He hushed and slept on.

Camilla drew up the low rocking-chair by the crib and sat down. And as she watched the baby,

she saw an expression come over his face which was like that of his father. Then she examined the features. They seemed to her to be such as Howard's must have been when he was young. New joy entered her heart, and she thought, "I can love him. I can love him now, for he is like the baby."

She bowed her head on the crib and offered a prayer of deep gratitude. Then she rose, went to the dressing-case, and looked for a piece of white ribbon. But finding none, she lifted the lid of her trunk and took out a piece which she had brought with her. Out of this she fashioned a bow, and pinned it on the bosom of her wrapper.

"Are you coming down to dinner to-day?" asked Nina, entering the room. "I will stay with the baby. Has he been asleep all morning? We never heard a sound, and so we thought both of you were asleep."

"He has slept a good part of the time, but not all of it."

"Why didn't you call us?"

"Well, I reckon I'd just as well get used to managing him myself. I'll have to go home before long, you know, and then I won't have you all to depend on."

When dinner was over, Mrs. Morgan, Nina, Joel, and little Annie assembled in Camilla's room. After a short time Nina remarked:

"I must get my things together, for Alvin will be here directly."

"Why didn't you just have him come to stay over Sunday?" Mrs. Morgan asked.

"He couldn't do that very well, Besides, I

know it's time I was getting back. Three or four days is about as long as I can well stay away right now."

"Come on, Annie, let's go to the flower-bed if mamma is goin' home this afternoon," said Joel.

"Don't bother grandma's flowers," spoke Nina.

"We're not goin' to pull 'em," said Joel. "We just likes to look at 'em; they are so pretty."

"Never mind, when you start home grandma will give you some," said Mrs. Morgan. "I can very well spare them while Aunt Milly and the baby stay. But when you are all away, not a child left, the old place seems so big and bare that a few flowers bloomin' in the yard helps it out a little. I don't know what I would do with C. D. if it wasn't for them. Last summer he dug in the geranium bed so much that I thought he surely would kill 'em. He said when he was doin' that it made him feel sorter like he was helpin' Camilla, for she used to do it."

"Now he never!" said Camilla, experiencing a pang of remorse.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Morgan, "I try to have somethin' or other in bloom as much as I can. C. D. says it comes the nearest to children of anything that he knows of, though it's a poor substitute."

Mrs. Morgan then went to the crib and took up the waking baby. "Who put the ribbons and the good clothes on grandma's boy, I want to know?" said she. "You didn't, did you, Camilla?"

"Yes, I did," said Camilla, triumphantly. "I suspect I had better take him."

"Will you listen?" said Mrs. Morgan. "She will be takin' him clean off soon. When did you say Howard was comin' for you?"

"In two weeks," he wrote.

"When the baby goes away I reckon C. D. will take to mindin' what Captain Morgan said to him more than ever." She smoothed the counterpane on Camilla's bed and straightened the pillows.

And Camilla observed that her mother's head went back and her chin came down, but in a different way from what they once did. Camilla thought, "If she only had been like that a few years ago!" She sighed, and then looked down at her white bow, and a new peace overspread her face.

Nina noticed Camilla's expression, and said:

"I believe you will make a real good mother, but I never thought so before."

"You don't say, Mrs. Crane?"

"Yes; but I must hurry about getting up the rigging for my children." Nina stooped and opened a valise on the floor. "I don't want Alvin to come and find me not ready."

"You seem to pay very close attention to what Alvin says these days," said Camilla. "I hope I shall be able to do half as well as you do, Nina."

"Now, Camilla!" But Nina was grateful, for she valued Camilla's opinions, and she said: "I don't mind admitting that I do look at things differently from the way I once did. After Alvin paid back the five hundred dollars that Uncle Dan

let him have, rather gave him in a way, and he was trying to live right, I thought I ought to act differently. He paid back the five hundred and the interest on it for the time he had it. Now we are out of debt and making a living. We can't do as Mrs. Casey does, but I reckon it's all right."

As Camilla retied the pink bows on her baby's wrists, she thought. "What changes have come! It's just as Helen said, God can use suffering, every kind of suffering, for a person's spiritual welfare. And when we are driven to the wall, as it were, through him is the only way out of trouble." She drew the baby closer, thinking: "Mother will make a white bow for you sooner than she did for herself. By rights she ought to have been forming her character all these years. By so doing she would have been forming your character too in a way." She straightened the loops of the white bow which she wore, and then looked up to listen to voices in the hall.

"The children brought me right up," said Helen. She stood in the doorway behind Joel, who held open the door.

"Why, come in," said Mrs. Morgan, rising from her chair. "How happened we never saw you? But we was all up here busy talkin'."

Helen kissed Camilla, and then looked at the baby, and asked;

"Who does he favor?"

"His father," answered Camilla.

"Just like him," said Mrs. Morgan. "I saw that from the first. Have a seat, Helen."

And Helen seated herself in a chair near Camilla.

Joel propped himself against the wall, and little Annie knelt in front of Camilla.

Soon little Annie took the baby's hand in hers, kissed it, and said:

"Ain't it sweet?"

"Now you made him cry," said Joel.

Little Annie hid her face against Camilla and cried too.

"He's too little yet," said Joel; "wait till he gets big enough to wrastle."

"Never mind," said Camilla to little Annie. "He may be as much hungry as anything else." And she began to nourish him.

"I 'ud quit now," said Joel; "the baby's quit. Just look at Aunt Milly. Don't she and the baby look like grandma's hyacinths?"

Every person laughed, and Camilla asked:

"Why not the tulips? You have been looking at them, too, haven't you?"

"No, no; the tulips they sorter settle down in their green leaves comfortable lookin', but the hyacinths they just stand up straight, and their green leaves looks like they was afraid to get close to 'em, or didn't know how, or somethin'."

The company laughed outright, and Mrs. Morgan said:

"Aunt Milly is sorter awkward sure enough, but I reckon she'll learn."

"She'll get to be like the tulips after a while, I reckon," conceded Joel. "The baby he is some like a tulip now. The tulip it opens up when the

sun shines on it, and the baby he opens his mouth when he takes his dinner; that's his sun, I reckon." Joel stood knocking his heel against the wall.

"Well, son, you are trying yourself," said Nina. "If grandma is going to give you a few flowers to carry home with you, we had better go down-stairs, and get them; for I see papa coming."

"I hope you are not going to hurry Alvin off before he sees the baby," said Camilla.

Mrs. Morgan, Nina, and the children went down-stairs, and soon Alvin came up to speak to Camilla.

"The little fellow has grown since I saw him last," said Alvin.

"You didn't expect him to stand still," said Camilla, proudly.

"A fine boy," admitted Alvin. "He will be a fine man some day. His mother will make him so."

Camilla was thankful for this encouragement, but she believed that Alvin thought better of her than she deserved, and she regretted that she was not more worthy of his good opinion.

"I will try, Alvin, as hard as you have tried for yours," she said.

Alvin was grateful.

When he was gone, and the sleeping babe was in the crib, Helen drew Camilla near the window. After sitting down, Helen said:

"I want to ask you something." Then she blushed and wished that Camilla would discern what that something was without having to put it

into words. "You know Bruce Turner is visiting me?"

"I have heard it," said Camilla. And she wondered what the question could be.

"And he used to visit you."

"Yes; but that was a long while ago, you know."

"It hasn't been so long but that you can remember whether he always acted the gentleman."

"You want to know whether he won my maiden heart, and then trampled on it?" said Camilla, laughing.

"I want to know whether he acted the gentleman in the matter. I wouldn't come to you with such a question if it were not that so much depends on what you and no one else can tell me; so much for me."

"And for him?" asked Camilla.

"For both, I reckon you would say."

"Your decision?"

"Yes."

Camilla thought: "I wished for a time to come when I could do Bruce Turner a favor, for he didn't deserve what he received at my hands. He will never find a better wife than Helen will make him, but if I tell her I believe he loved me in all probability she will not marry him. What shall I do? I do so wish to help Bruce out."

Helen broke the silence by saying:

"You don't mind now, do you, Camilla? I wouldn't ask, but so much depends on what you can tell me."

Camilla looked down at her white ribbon, think-

ing: "The white bows of father, mother, Nina, and Alvin have done so much for them. White bows, I call 'em, but none of the folks wear any white ribbon as a sign of the change. The change has been so good for them that I can't part with my bow now. I can't do it, for so much depends on it not only for myself but for the baby. You, Bruce, you have only yourself, and so you will have to fight your own battle, for I can't tell a tale to help you out." And she said:

"Helen, I think he loved me then, but I didn't love him, and I didn't want to marry him, and so I jilted him." Camilla thought: "Now, Bruce, you'll have to bear the consequences. I'm sorry, but I couldn't help it. You know it's *my baby*, if there were no other reason."

Helen exclaimed:

"*You jilted him!*"

"Yes, *I did*. But I'm sure he's glad of it now if you will marry him."

"And *you jilted him!*"

"Why, bless your soul! I'm not the first woman that ever jilted a man. I'm ashamed that I wasn't different at the time, so I wouldn't have placed myself in the position where I had it to do. But that needn't matter with you. If he tells you he loves you, you may rest assured he's not still loving me."

"He was true to you? It wasn't his fault, not a bit of it?"

"Not a bit that I know of."

"That's all right," said Helen. "I'm very, very much obliged to you. It was a great big piece of

impudence. Thank you many, many times." Helen leaned over and kissed Camilla, and then she rose to go, saying, "I believe your white bow is more becoming to you than your red one was." And she thought, "The deepening of the red of Camilla's nature has commenced."

As she rode home she thought of the new life which she would enter upon some day. And she recognized a sense of shrinking from the public gaze which she as the wife of Bruce Turner would attract. She did not realize that she had developed after the manner of Lady Charming. But there was a gilt edge to the book of character which she had formed. The knowledge would have assured her that she was adequate to the position.

When she arrived at home she found her father very ill.

CHAPTER XXX

"Daughter," said Captain Morgan, calling Helen to his bedside, "What have you decided to do about marrying Bruce?"

"Let us wait till you are well again," Helen replied, "and then we will talk about it."

"I would like to know now. Is there anything in the way of your promising to marry him?"

"Nothing that I know of," Helen admitted. "But don't disturb yourself about it now. I'll never leave you and mother as long as you need me."

"Where is Bruce?" asked the captain.

"He has just gone for the doctor, father."

Dr. Grose came and examined the patient. Afterwards he took Bruce to one side and asked him if he could remain with Captain Morgan through the night. "I think it'll be quick work," the doctor said. "I have to leave now, but I'll be back after a while."

Bruce realized in a measure the sorrow that the death of Captain Morgan would cause Helen, and he experienced genuine grief on his own account, but at the same time he heard a note of his own future happiness.

Soon after the doctor left, Captain Morgan said:

"Daughter, Bruce. Now, children, my children, as you go through life, walk so when you come down to the grave the horror of it will be lost in the thought of the beauties beyond."

"O father!" sobbed Helen.

"Don't grieve for me, daughter, I shall still live. I'll wait for you Over There. Now, mother, you must try to think of the splendors I'm enjoying, and which you will enjoy with me after a time."

"But father, what shall I do without you? How shall I get on? I know you won't be a Nobody Over There, but what will I do?"

"Mother, I haven't thought lately anything about what I'd be Over There; whether I would be a Nobody or a Somebody. I haven't thought about myself in that way since the election. I think I lost that notion in love for my Master—love for Him consumed it. I know it's only through His mercy that I'll get to Heaven at all. And I go trusting in His mercy. I haven't done everything that I ought to have done, but I have made an honest effort of late years to live right. Now He's taking care of death for me. One thing more though before I go, I must commend you to His care. He then lifted his voice and prayed:

"O Lord, keep these my loved ones. Be a friend to them, be a protector for them, be a father to them—a stronger, a wiser, a better father—than—I—have—been." He turned his head, and the warfare for this Christian soldier ended.

CHAPTER XXXI

The honeysuckles had bloomed again, but Mrs. Morgan gathered them this time without thinking of the pleasures which the years of sickness had robbed her. As she plucked them, thoughts of that other morning stole upon her when a loving arm had embraced her and loving words had fallen from lips now silent. And her heart reached out for the support of the Everlasting Arms and for the comfort that comes from Above.

When Mrs. Morgan entered the room, carrying a bunch of honeysuckles, Helen looked up from her sewing, and realized a newly awakened sympathy for her. For Helen understood better what the loss of her father meant to her mother.

As Mrs. Morgan placed the flowers in a tumbler on the mantel-shelf, footsteps sounded on the veranda. And Helen rose to open the door for Bruce Turner.

When Mrs. Morgan was left alone she went to the closet and looked at a pair of man's shoes whose heels had not been blacked. Then she took the Bible from the table, and sought to learn more about the way to travel the narrow road, the one which the beloved wearer of the shoes had trodden.

Bruce and Helen walked toward the spring and talked of their wedding.

Bruce took out of his pocket a letter from Dr. Cary. This told that Oscar Taylor wished to come to make sketches of the ancestral home.

"What do you say about it?" Bruce asked. "You will be mistress of the place then."

"He is your cousin, isn't he? To be sure we'll let him come." Helen spoke her decision readily, thinking that Bruce wished to entertain his relative. Then she remembered that Oscar Taylor was an artist. She clasped her hands, and cried: "Oh, it's come!—my opportunity to learn to paint. Oh, oh! God is so good."

They came to a large white-oak and sat down under its boughs.

Bruce pulled a piece of bark off the tree and threw it on the water, experiencing jealousy for the first time in his courtship of Helen. He was jealous of her love for her art, and deep-rooted he saw that love was. She was the first to speak:

"What a strange mingling of joy and sorrow can be in the heart. I have sorrow for the loss of father and joy for my new life by your side and for this—the opening of the way that I have longed for, the way to become an artist."

Bruce pulled his hat over his eyes and began picking at another piece of bark.

"What is it?" Helen asked. "Is it possible there is a sorrow in your heart of which you have never told me?"

"I'm afraid it will pain you," he said, turning his eyes upon her. Then with his characteristic frankness he said, "I'm jealous."

"Oh, you are?" And Helen laughed. "What of?"

"Seriously, I am. I believe you love your art better than you do me."

"You don't, do you?"

"I'm afraid you do."

"If I tell you that I love you just as much as I can, and I love my art, as you call it, because I can't help it, because I think God intends it, would that help you any? If I am taking anything from you by loving that I don't know it. That is just my way, while the way of another woman is to serve the world through her musical talent, or perhaps her talent for housekeeping. I am to be a housekeeper too, you are thinking. But I'll try not to let my art interfere with any duty to you. Away back yonder before I learned to love you, I wished for the chance to work only at art. I don't wish for that now. Besides my love for you, God has shown me that through you is my way to art. I believe that I am on the road that He wants to lead me over. When I began to love you, I didn't want to love you. I fought it with all my might. For one thing, I thought if you should ever love me, and should ask me to marry you (of which there seemed no probability at the time, I'll confess now), it would put an end to my art. But I loved you in spite of all that. God intended me to love you, I think. Now I have told you all just as I understand it myself. Haven't I succeeded in driving away your jealousy?"

"I believe you love me the best you can, my darling. I have no fears but that you will always do that."

"But you are a little jealous yet," she said,

somewhat disappointed. She took off her hat and tossed it on the grass.

He continued pulling at his second piece of bark without speaking. And Helen said:

"Well, I'll confess I'm jealous too." She told of her conversation with Camilla, and then said, "At times since I've been jealous because you ever loved another woman."

He caught her hand and said:

"My darling, my darling, that that should make you suffer!" After a few minutes he removed a flower from the lapel of his coat and placed it on her head. It was a blossom from the mound of the scarlet bow. He told her in his own way that she was the flower which had grown from the grave of his buried love. Afterwards, he waited, but she did not speak, and he asked:

"Isn't it all right now?" But his own heart answered, "No."

At length she said:

"We are learning what we would no doubt have to learn later on. I mean we are learning that there is nothing outside of Christ which has not some shade of disappointment in it, not even our love for each other. Now that we realize that truth we can face it squarely and gain by knowing it. I believe that we can grow even closer to each other by trying to get closer to Him."

"We understand it now, don't we?" he said.

She saw in his face a stronger love than she had seen there before. In recognition of this fact she allowed him to kiss her lips for the first time.

When Helen went to her new home she took her mother with her. But it was a long while before she learned that Mrs. Morgan carried along a pair of man's shoes whose heels had not been blacked. She knew though that her mother left her work-basket, and as time passed grew to read her Book more and more.

About two years later a new grave was made by the side of Captain Morgan's, and Mrs. Morgan had no further need for the companionship of the shoes whose heels had not been blacked.

A few weeks afterwards Bruce showed Helen a letter from Dr. Cary. This advised Bruce of property which he had inherited. But the letter did not tell that Dr. Cary had resigned his own interest in an estate in Bruce's favor, or that Helen had anything to do with his resigning it. He had intended returning to the country some time, and asking Helen perhaps to marry him, but neither Bruce nor Helen ever knew about this intention. The pressure of business prevented his coming for a time. And when Helen married, the doctor realized more fully what he had permitted his profession to cheat him out of. Upon this realization, her talk with him took a stronger hold on him.

When Helen read the letter she returned it to Bruce, asking:

"What do you think you will do with it?"

"The first thing that I thought of was that I

would take you to Paris. A change of scenery and everything will benefit you."

"Paris!" said Helen. "Paris, where I can study art!"

"Where you can study art, yes. But I'm not jealous of it now, little wife." And he took her on his knee and kissed her. "You have made my life richer and fuller by showing me beauties that I had never seen and never would have seen but for you."

"But will that be the best way to use the money, you think?" she asked.

"I—think—so," he said slowly. "I have the impression that this is the opportunity that you have been looking forward to."

"The instructions that I received from Cousin Oscar helped to prepare me for this," she said. "To think it has come! This opportunity! God has brought me along a road where I've learned to want to paint chiefly because I believe He wants me to learn."

Helen became an artist. She saw the promise, however, of a greater artist in the little man who, with his sister, planted the tiger-lilies, the hollyhocks, and the lilies-of-the-valley on Uncle Dan's grave, the one who looked at the ring on his sister's finger, and said:

"I reckon I've got a watch that I can wear when I get big."

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